



## **California Governor Approves Additional \$80M for Emergency School Meals During Pandemic**

Sept. 22, 2020 (Sacramento) - Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday approved additional funding for emergency school meals, giving local school districts more certainty as they feed students during distance learning. With 97% of students learning from home because of the pandemic, the Center for Ecoliteracy, the Office of Kat Taylor and NextGen California have responded to this new reality by advocating to provide communities funding and flexibility as they navigate the new challenges of providing meals to children.

“We applaud California’s leaders for recognizing school food service workers who are going above and beyond to feed hungry children while also overcoming logistical hurdles wrought by the pandemic,” said Kat Taylor, Founder of TomKat Ranch Educational Foundation. “We look forward to continuing our work with legislative leadership at the state and federal level to ensure all children have access to healthy school meals during and after this public health crisis.”

In June, the California Legislature recognized that supplemental funding was critically needed to help cover the additional costs and losses of revenue for schools, associated with COVID-19 food service. The \$112 million approved by the Legislature earlier this year was crucial, but not nearly enough. This additional \$80 million allocation is necessary to extend much-needed funding that provides school districts with an extra \$0.75 for every breakfast and lunch that they served during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic from mid-March through August 2020.

However, the additional funding does not address the entirety of school districts’ deficits or the support they will need in the new school year. An August survey of 39 school districts, representing 800,000 students, by the Center for Ecoliteracy revealed that 92% of school nutrition departments are experiencing budget deficits at the start of the school year. If the patterns observed with this small sample of districts hold true, the Center for Ecoliteracy estimates that school food departments across the state could be facing a combined \$325 million budget deficit for the first six months of the pandemic.

“In light of these sobering projections,” said Adam Kessleman, Executive Director at the Center for Ecoliteracy, “we are pleased to see California legislators responding swiftly with this additional funding. Combined with essential USDA waivers, the additional funding will help ensure access to consistent, healthy meals during a time of compounding crises.”

### **About the Office of Kat Taylor**

Kat Taylor is active in a variety of social enterprises, public benefit and philanthropic ventures. Concurrently, she serves as Co-founder and Board Chair of Beneficial State Bank, a Community Development Financial Institution, whose mission is to bring beneficial banking to under-resourced communities in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner. Taylor is also the owner of TomKat Ranch, a cattle ranch that uses environmentally beneficial practices and research to demonstrate, inspire, and teach the adoption of regenerative agriculture. Taylor serves and has served on many nonprofit boards, including CuriOdyssey, Ecotrust, Good Samaritan Family Resource Center, the Harvard Board of Overseers, Insight Prison Project, KQED, ProPublica and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

### **About Center for Ecoliteracy**

The Center for Ecoliteracy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to cultivating education for sustainable living in K–12 schools. Their California Food for California Kids® initiative builds the capacity and commitment of school districts to provide all students with fresh, locally-grown food and educate them about how their food choices can make a difference to their communities and to the planet.

### **About NextGen California**

NextGen California is a non-profit organization dedicated to working on California legislative, budgetary, regulatory, and programmatic issues. Originally founded in 2014 to focus on climate and environmental policy, in recent years, NextGen California has broadened its scope to advance solutions to various economic and social justice issues. Specifically, our policy portfolio now encompasses topics such as: criminal justice and immigration; healthcare and food insecurity; mental health and voting rights; student loan debt and the Census; veterans issues and consumer protections; and affordable housing and environmental justice.