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March 23, 2017

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Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
1615 Capitol Avenue
P.O. Box 997377, MS 0500
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Re: SB 138 (McGuire): Free and Reduced Price Meals (Support)

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Board meeting on March 2, 2017 to take a Support recommendation on SB 138 (McGuire), a bill that would require a school district or county superintendent of schools that has a very high poverty school to apply to operate a federal universal meal service with breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students of such designated schools.

This bill would increase the number of students receiving a healthy breakfast and lunch by requiring the California Department of Education (CDE) to share with school districts the Medi-Cal participation data it receives from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Local educational agencies that participate in a federal school meal program would then use that data to directly certify pupils for free and reduced-price school meals. This process would increase the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals and increase the chances that a school will be eligible to receive the free federal reimbursement rate for all reimbursable school breakfasts and lunches.

SB 138 increases access to healthy meals and promotes better nutrition for learning. SB 138 also helps students and schools use federal nutrition resources to address children's hunger and food insecurity. School meals are an essential resource to reduce chronic absenteeism and to further academic success.

As you are aware, CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now the California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, and commissions, as well as officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

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This position of support for requiring a very high poverty school to operate a federal universal meal service is consistent with CCLHO's strategic priority of promoting and protecting health and well-being through a focus on targeted outcomes. It is further consistent with the legislative priority of providing recommendations on population-based issues that affect the health of all Californians.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Ken.Cutler@co.nevada.ca.us or at 530-265-7154.

Sincerely and on behalf of the CCLHO membership,

Original signed by Dr. Ken Cutler

Ken Cutler, MD, MPH

President, California Conference of Local Health Officers