

Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian  
Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 558 (Nazarian) Plant-Based School Meals – Support**

Dear Assemblymember Nazarian,

I am proud to support the Child Nutrition Act of 2022, Assembly Bill 558. This bill incentivizes healthy, climate-friendly meals in California's public schools by providing an additional reimbursement to schools that serve a plant-based entrée or milk option. AB 558 also proposes to offer grants to schools for training and technical assistance needed to scale up their healthy, plant-based food offering.

While some California school districts, such as Los Angeles Unified, Oakland Unified, and Santa Barbara Unified, have started serving plant-based options, cost remains a significant barrier for districts across the state. Animal-based foods and cow's milk are heavily subsidized by the federal government relative to plant-based foods and milk options. The labor, production, manufacturing, and technology involved in making an attractive plant-based meal option for students can be costly.

It is understood that one of the most significant state concerns is expanding access to food for children and responding to child hunger. However, expanding access does not mean that we should keep feeding our children poor, processed foods.

Research shows reducing meat consumption can reduce the risk of diabetes, maintain a healthy weight, and provide protection against cancer and other diseases. Growing evidence also suggests that encouraging a plant-based diet is more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Moving to more plant-based options can reduce our carbon footprint, and requires less land and water for production.

Furthermore, regarding the environmental aspect, this bill can help California reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the estimated 540 million school lunches served each year by incentivizing more plant-based school meals.

**For these reasons, I thank you for authoring AB 558 and urge your colleagues in the legislature to vote "Aye" on this important legislation.**

Sincerely,