

**Assembly Joint Resolution**

**No. 31**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Skinner**

August 26, 2013

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Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31—Relative to child nutrition programs.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 31, as introduced, Skinner. Child nutrition programs: school meals.

This bill would declare that the Legislature supports federal standards for healthy meals, including those standards recently adopted pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, would urge the President and the Congress of the United States to ensure that reimbursement rates for school meals are adequate to fully fund the cost of producing a nutritious school meal relative to the cost of living in a region, and would state that the eligibility scale used to qualify families for free and reduced-priced meals be adjusted, as specified.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program is declared  
2 to be the policy of Congress, “as a measure of national security,  
3 to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation’s children and  
4 to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural  
5 commodities and other food, by assisting the states, through  
6 grants-in-aid and other means, in providing an adequate supply of  
7 food and other facilities for the establishment, maintenance,  
8 operation, and expansion of nonprofit school lunch programs”;  
9 and

1 WHEREAS, Federal regulations further state that participating  
2 schools shall ensure that children gain a full understanding of the  
3 relationship between proper eating and good health; and

4 WHEREAS, Child nutrition programs are responsible for  
5 collaborating with the school community to implement  
6 comprehensive nutrition and wellness policies in school districts;  
7 and

8 WHEREAS, All of California's more than 6 million pupils  
9 deserve access to high-quality, safe, nutritious meals available in  
10 the school setting, recognizing the link between adequate  
11 nourishment and educational performance; and

12 WHEREAS, Children who experience hunger have been shown  
13 to be more likely to have lower math scores, decreased  
14 attentiveness, increased likelihood of repeating a grade, increased  
15 absences and tardiness, and more referrals to special education  
16 services; and

17 WHEREAS, Child nutrition programs in California provide  
18 over 4 million meals to school children daily, and must comply  
19 with complex state and federal requirements, provide adequate  
20 food preparation and dining facilities, and meet budget  
21 requirements despite rapidly escalating food, energy, transportation,  
22 labor, and other costs; and

23 WHEREAS, Losses in the school meal programs must be offset  
24 by other revenue sources that would otherwise support classroom  
25 instruction; and

26 WHEREAS, Recent changes in federal menu planning  
27 regulations resulting from the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids  
28 Act of 2010 have increased costs so that they now exceed the  
29 additional reimbursements provided for school meals; and

30 WHEREAS, The difference between reimbursement and cost  
31 undermines the ability to continue to provide nutritious meals to  
32 all pupils; and

33 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Agriculture  
34 recognizes higher cost as a factor in determining reimbursement  
35 rates by allowing a higher federal reimbursement rate in Alaska  
36 and Hawaii; and

37 WHEREAS, Many families who qualify for reduced-price meals,  
38 prescribed by federal law using the federal poverty level, find it  
39 difficult to pay the reduced fee, and the fee for a paid meal is an

1 insurmountable barrier to participation for an increasing number  
2 of families in California; and

3 WHEREAS, The eligibility scale to qualify pupils for free or  
4 reduced-price meals is the same scale throughout the country and  
5 does not consider regions with higher costs of living; and

6 WHEREAS, The January 2013 Institute of Medicine report  
7 “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the  
8 Evidence to Define Benefit Adequacy” recognizes local and  
9 regional costs as negatively impacting the effectiveness of the  
10 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and

11 WHEREAS, The same dynamics impact school meal programs;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, A self-sufficiency index, which identifies the  
14 income levels at which families can meet their most basic needs  
15 without public support, is available in all regions to apply to meal  
16 eligibility standards; and

17 WHEREAS, A single-parent household with two children in  
18 San Mateo County, California, needs \$56,280 to be self-sufficient,  
19 while a similar family in Guernsey County, Ohio, is self-sufficient  
20 with only \$24,258; now, therefore, be it

21 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*  
22 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature supports federal standards  
23 for healthy meals, including those standards recently adopted  
24 pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and urges  
25 the President and the Congress of the United States to ensure that  
26 reimbursement rates for school meals are adequate to fully fund  
27 the cost of producing a nutritious school meal relative to the cost  
28 of living in a region; and be it further

29 *Resolved*, That the eligibility scale used to qualify families for  
30 free and reduced-price meals be adjusted according to the  
31 self-sufficiency index for the region served; and be it further

32 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
33 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United  
34 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the  
35 Majority Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator  
36 and Representative from California in the Congress of the United  
37 States.

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