



April 7, 2010

Senator Mark Leno
State Capitol, Room 4061
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 1413 (Leno) – Access to Water in Schools

Dear Senator Leno:

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA) is in support of SB 1413 which would require school districts to make free, fresh drinking water available in school food service areas by January 1st, 2012. CCPHA is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that raises awareness about critical public health issues and mobilizes communities to promote the establishment of effective state and local health policies.

Childhood obesity has become an epidemic in the United States and is the primary cause of type 2 diabetes and other long-term health problems. Since 1980, the number of obese children in the United States has more than tripled, and obesity now rivals smoking as the largest cause of preventable death and disease. If the current obesity trends are not reversed, it is predicted that one in three children—and nearly half of Latino and African American children—born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime.

As a calorie-free beverage, water is a healthy and no-cost alternative to sugary sodas, juices, sports drinks, and other packaged beverages that contribute to the childhood obesity epidemic. Yet, a recent study conducted by California Project LEAN and the California Department of Education found that at least 40% of California schools in responding school districts reported no access to free drinking water for students during meal periods. Additionally, many students report inoperable, poorly maintained, and/or unhygienic water fountains at their school.

Ensuring that children have access to clean drinking water at our schools is a matter of equity. Every bodily system depends on water for its overall maintenance and health. Even mild dehydration affects energy level, mood, and cognition and experts recommend the consumption of water with every meal. A child's access to fresh, safe drinking water should not be dependent upon their ability to purchase bottled water at school or to carry heavy bottles of water from home.

SB 1314 helps ensure equitable access to free and safe drinking water in our schools and helps our youth establish healthy drinking habits that will benefit them for a lifetime. For these reasons CCPHA is proud to support SB 1314 and thanks you for authoring this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Richard,
Policy Director