



California libraries provided nearly 300,000 summer meals through “Lunch at the Library”

For Immediate Release

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January 13, 2020

Sacramento, Calif. – California public libraries provided nearly 300,000 free lunches to children and teens last summer thanks to a \$1 million investment by the state. The 2018-2019 State Budget included \$1 million in one-time funds to expand the successful Lunch at the Library program to more libraries throughout the state. Lunch at the Library was created in 2013 to provide nutritious meals and educational enrichment opportunities to California children during the summer months.

Most of the funding is in the form of “micro-grants” up to \$5,000 to individual libraries to help them purchase the equipment, supplies and assistance they need to offer meals to kids in low-income communities. The grants can also be used to help libraries bring services to other summer meal sites in the community.

Of the California low-income children and teens who receive a free or subsidized lunch during the school year, only one out of five do so in the summer. The more children served, the more aid California receives from the federal government. Boosting the number to two out of five kids would trigger \$40 million in federal aid from the USDA Summer Food Service.

The Lunch at the Library program was piloted in 2013 at 17 libraries, using one-time federal funds. By 2019, the program served 289,587 meals at 219 sites.

Recognizing that libraries are a welcoming environment and offer enrichment and learning activities other summer meal sites might not, Sen. Holly Mitchell, a Los Angeles Democrat, proposed using state funds to make it easier for more libraries to serve meals and bring library services to other meal sites.

About the Lunch at the Library Program: Lunch at the Library is a project of the California State Library administered by the Pacific Library Partnership. For more information about how Lunch at the Library works, go [here](#).

About the State Library: Founded in 1850, the [California State Library](#) is the central reference and research library for the Governor’s office, Legislature, state employees, and the general public. The State Library administers federal and state grants for programs in historical preservation, library construction, literacy, and broadband connectivity in public libraries.

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