



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**OCT 12 2019**

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 354 without my signature.

This bill requires local schools that do not participate in a federal school meal program to provide adequate space for students to consume meals. It requires the schools to report to the California Department of Education (CDE) the alternative meal program each of its schoolsites will follow. Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, it requires the CDE to implement a monitoring program, including onsite reviews of these schoolsites, to verify compliance with federal nutrition requirements.

Current law already requires school districts and county offices of education to provide each student in need one nutritionally adequate free or reduced-priced meal during the school day. AB 1871 (Chapter 480, Statutes of 2018), required charter schools to provide each student in need with a nutritionally adequate free or reduced-price meal each school day. I have not seen evidence of widespread disregard for these requirements that warrants such a prescriptive approach.

This bill would impose substantial ongoing costs, a matter that should be considered within the state budget process, where the Administration and Legislature can balance the competing demands with limited resources.

I have directed my Department of Finance to develop options to expand access to free and reduced-price meal programs. I look forward to working with you in next year's budget to improve this important program.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom