

# Support SB 818/HB 2664 to Improve Nutrition and Fitness in Early Child Care

Texas should improve minimum standards for child care facilities for nutrition, active play, and screen time to allow the smallest Texans the opportunity to build a healthy life.

When children are healthy during the first years of life, they are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout their childhood, be successful in school, and achieve lifelong health. In Texas, about one million young kids learn, play, and grow in licensed or regulated child care programs. **Families know that child care programs are key partners in reinforcing positive habits and ensuring children get the benefits of healthy foods and active play time to build their minds and muscles.**

**About one in four children age two to five is overweight or obese. And children who are overweight or obese as preschoolers are five times more likely to be overweight or obese as adults.** Ensuring our youngest children have opportunities to eat nutritious foods, stay active, and develop healthy habits reduces health care costs by preventing expensive chronic conditions like heart disease, stroke, and asthma.

Parents know their children deserve the benefits of interactive activities that promote brain and physical development, such as talking, playing, running, jumping, and reading together in order to develop their minds and muscles. Being physically active and having a healthy diet before the age of five is associated with improved child development and cognitive outcomes. Research shows that young kids that eat a healthy diet – high in lean protein and fresh fruits and vegetables – are more likely to have a higher IQ at age eight. Additionally, research has shown that as the amount of television young children watch increases, so does the likelihood they will have a poor quality diet and risk for obesity.

## SB 818/HB 2664 Update Child Care Minimum Standards for:

**Nutrition:** Ensures minimum standards for nutrition and meals are consistent with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture.

**Active Play:** Ensures children have the opportunity to be active throughout the day by improving minimum standards to clarify the amount of time children should be allowed to move and play.

**Screen Time:** Brings guidelines for screen time in line with nationally-recognized standards to promote brain development, limiting the maximum amount of time young children can be in front of screens in child care.

**Training:** Adds nutrition and physical activity to the state's list of annual training topics for child care providers and directors to ensure providers have new tools and skills to help children maintain a healthy weight and incorporate active play throughout the day.

**Information for Parents:** Ensures child care programs are effective partners with parents by providing information to parents on healthy meals and snacks, food allergies, and choking hazards.

**Texas Rising Star Rating System:** Adds participation in the CACFP program as a metric in the methodology for the state's Texas Rising Star rating system, a voluntary recognition program that rates and rewards providers that go above and beyond state minimum standards.