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Excerpts and Summary of the 34th Hunger and Nutrition Forum
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MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

California Food Policy Advocates

The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Phoua Moua and Carey Berend.

FOCUS: A NEW RELEASE Study: Overweight and Unfit Children in California Legislative Districts

Phoua Moua: Welcome to the Hunger and Nutrition Forum. My name is Phoua Moua, and I am the hunger and nutrition assistant Fresno Metro Ministry. Edie Jessup, our program coordinator for the project, is on a much-needed vacation this month. I will be running the show today.

The packet includes; agenda for the forum, a power point presentation by **Jessica Reich** at California Food Policy Advocates on the coexisting problem of childhood overweight and hunger. As we get updated on more research on issues of hunger and nutrition, we find that the need to work on these issues is huge. At the end of last year, 2002, the California Health Interview Survey done by UCLA examined hunger and food insecurity and Fresno County was number two and Tulare County was number one in food insecurity. At the beginning of this year the 2002 agricultural production rate came out and Fresno and Tulare were once again number one and two in production of produce. The results of these updates make the Central Valley ironic in a way that we grow all the food in the world and yet we have so many people that are hungry and insecure about food. As more studies are done we have another dilemma, which is the epidemic of overweight and obesity in the Central Valley, California and around the nation. This concerns me, especially in the epidemic of childhood obesity, unfit and overweight. In Jessica's presentation she outlines good information and correlation on how hunger and obesity can coexist. When we think of hunger, we think, no food. When we think of obesity, we think too much food. In the Central Valley we have hungry people that are obese and overweight. We know that in several studies it is found that the diet of low-income families tends to be higher in fat and low in fruits and vegetables and dairy products. In addition if the families and the neighborhoods of those low-income families don't have access to the fresh produce and good nutritional quality food then that is another barrier. This is an issue of nutritional health. **A question**

that we need to ask as community members and advocates; is do people in the Central Valley of California consistently get the access they need to good quality food in the amount that they need. Moving on, after the power point presentation you'll find the summary of our last forum, which was a follow up to the childhood obesity and stakeholder's roundtable that happened at the end of May. Then the following few colorful pages are the fact sheets that came from the California Center for Public Advocacy study on Childhood unfit and overweight in each legislative district. Senate District 14 is Senator Charles Poochigian. The 16th Senate District is Senator Dean Flores. The 29th Assembly District is Assemblyman Steve Samuelian. The 30th Assembly District is Assembly Member Nicole Parra, and the 31st Assembly District is Assembly Member Sarah Reyes. Those fact sheets are followed by the evaluation sheet for the forum. I would really appreciate it if they are filled out by the end of the forum. There are also handouts on the table that Stefan Harvey brought with her that are part of the study that she will be presenting.

The next thing on the agenda is Nutrition Bill updates. Because of the childhood obesity issue in the nation and in California there have been various nutrition bills and physical activity bills, in the legislature this year. I just wanted to highlight and inform you of a few that are going on right now. One of them is the SB 65 by Senator Torlakson. This bill would require districts to hold public hearings as part of their school board meetings before individual schools enter into contracts with carbonated beverages or non-nutritious beverages or foods to make sure that the district is protecting the integrity of public funds and making sure the funds raised support education. This bill would also require a clear notification stating that these contracts are on the school board agendas. The current status of this bill is that it has passed through the Senate floor 23 to 15 and it's in the Assembly Education Committee, and the hearing is today. Another nutrition bill is AB 598 by Assembly Member Hancock. This one will require that all schools that use bond funds to modernize their water and plumbing systems would also modernize their water fountains in sufficient numbers in easy to get to locations to serve the anticipated student population in schools. What is happening is that a lot of low-income neighborhood schools don't even have working drinking fountains and the kids that go to these schools are having to buy bottled water. Water is a basic need for nourishment it should be free. This bill was passed out of the Assembly, 79 to 0 and it is currently in the Senate Committee on Education, and the hearing is today. SB 677 by Senator Ortiz is another nutrition bill that is big. This bill was amended to restrict carbonated beverages or soda sales during the school day in elementary, middle, or junior high schools starting January of 2004. The original also included high schools, which is where most soda sales are made in the school arena. This bill was passed in the Assembly Health Committee and is currently in the Assembly Education Committee, and the hearing is today. This was just a quick update on some of the nutrition bills. I believe Stefan Harvey will elaborate on more them in her presentation.

Now that I'm almost back on schedule, without further ado, I would like to introduce our speaker for today. She came to us all the way from Davis and is the assistant director with the California Center for Public Health Advocacy; I would like to welcome Stefan Harvey.

Stefan Harvey: Thank you very much. It's delightful to be here.

I did drive from Davis this morning, and everything was going along swimmingly and I had plenty of time. In fact, I had more time than I thought I would, and I don't how many of you use Map Quest, but once again, I had an experience with Map Quest which indicates that one should, if one is going to use Map Quest, always check it. At least their error was the last step and they sent me in the wrong direction on Cedar, but because it was getting close to your meeting I was paying attention to the time and realized that the numbers were going up and I thought, well, if I just turn around and go the other way on Cedar. For years I worked in Washington D.C. on national nutrition issues specifically having to do with the WIC program, and it was always a delight to get out of Washington D.C. I'm a native Californian, and a year-and-a-half ago I moved home to California and now I find myself not working inside the federal beltway but for all practical purposes working within the state capitol beltway, so it is indeed a pleasure to find myself in a community today. When Edie and I talked about the fact that

you had these ongoing forums and she expressed interest in having a bit more information about our study described and discussed I was struck by the fact that you all in this area, it seems to me, are steps ahead of many of your colleagues in other parts of California because on a routine basis you get together to discuss issues addressing nutrition, both not enough nutrition as well as what we're here to talk about today, which is an overabundance of nutrition, i.e., the overweight and obesity problem.

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy is a nonprofit organization that was founded by the two public health associations here in California. The study that I've come to discuss this afternoon was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In addition, the California Center for Public Health Advocacy receives funding from the California Endowment as well as the Wellness Foundation and some branches of Kaiser. What I'd like to discuss this afternoon are three issues. They all go together very easily as you will come to see, and I think those of you that participate in ongoing coalitions know that research on the one hand, and that's the first thing I'm going to talk about this afternoon is our study, legislation on the other hand, and elected officials, you know that all three of those things go together.

This is a particularly crucial time in Sacramento with regard to at least one of the three bills that has been highlighted already in this forum and that I will discuss in greater detail in a few minutes. Now, our study, in an analysis of the fitness gram data that is data that's collected on an annual basis by California public schools, and just for curiosity sakes, how many of you in the room know that 5th, 7th, and 9th graders are tested for physical fitness? About half of you. And of those of you that know and may be parents do you have either a recent recollection or a faint recollection of having a child bring those scores home? Very faint. A couple of you. Well, for those of you that are not familiar with current law **5th, 7th, and 9th graders are tested for physical fitness on an annual basis, and each year the California Department of Education reports the findings of those tests to the legislature and the Governor.** We at the California Center for Public Health Advocacy obtained the data from the 2001 physical fitness test from the California Department of Education and analyzed that data. Now to give you a sense as to the extensiveness, albeit only 5th, 7th, and 9th graders are tested, there were 1.2 million children that were involved in the 2001 data, the 2001 test. We looked at the percentage of children that are overweight and unfit in each of the 120 legislative districts here in California. Now, you all may know that there are 80 assembly districts in California and 40 senate districts. Up until the last reapportionment each senate district had two assembly districts in it. With the redistricting as a result of the most recent census, no longer is there a neat and tidy correlation between the 40 senate districts here in California and the 80 assembly districts. **We looked at legislative districts because we wanted to enable each and every one of the 40 senators in California and each of the 80 assembly people in California, we wanted to provide them information about the children in their legislative district,** and for those of you that come to this forum from the health community as opposed to the anti-hunger community you will readily see that our basis of analysis, legislative districts, is quite different from the way that health data is most often reported. Usually health data reflects counties or cities, which is very informative, but in terms of having a tool which enables any of us in this room to talk with our colleague from Assemblywoman Parra's office about the specific state of children in Assemblywoman Parra's district. Previously one had to kind of mix and match if one was using county data or as the Department of Education does with this fitness data, it analyzes, very understandably, because we're talking about the Education Department, it analyzes the data based on schools and school districts. So as I said, a new and different way of looking at the fitness data.

There were 1.2 million children involved in the 2001 test, and probably for everyone in this room the findings of our analysis by legislative district were really not surprising. **The first most significant finding is that the epidemic of overweight and unfit children is a reality here in the state of California. On a statewide basis – the percentage of children that were overweight was 26.5%. I think all of us in this profession, and hopefully all Californians regardless of profession,**

would say that to have nearly a quarter of California's children being overweight is an unacceptable situation, and those of us that are public health advocates know the health consequences and the economic consequences of such a finding. Now, on the fitness side of the scale the situation among California's children is even graver. Across, again, **all assembly districts and all senate districts 39.6% of the children are unfit, and we know that there is a relationship between being overweight and being unfit, and we know what the healthcare consequences and the economic consequences are of nearly 40% of California's children being unfit.** Among the other findings looking at, again, statewide data, there were actually some surprises here because there were a couple of issues that at least my common sense suggested that our finding would have been different. **The second statewide finding is that there are more overweight boys than girls.** In more assembly and senate districts there's a higher percentage of unfit girls than unfit boys, and then if we look at the percentages of overweight and unfit children as they age, and by that I mean compare the 9th grade data to the 5th grade data, **we find that as kids get older there is a lower percentage of them that are overweight, but as children get older the percentage of them that are unfit increases.** Now, if we look at your five legislative districts, the three assembly districts and the two senate districts, **in three of your five legislative districts the average number of children that are overweight exceeds that state average of 26.5%, and of your five districts two of them had a higher percentage of unfit children.** One of the issues that became very critical as we began examining the results of our analysis was the tendency to compare legislative district against legislative district, and as I said initially, **the finding was that the epidemic of overweight and unfit children is an epidemic in every part of the state of California so that in each of the 120 legislative districts the percentage of children that are overweight and the percentage that are unfit I think we would all agree is unacceptably too high.**

If we look at the data that indicates the ethnic breakdown of each of the legislative districts, we find that across all districts nearly 34% of Latino children are overweight and nearly 45% of them are unfit. In three of your legislative districts, two assembly districts and a single senate district, there are a significantly high percentage of Latino children. In the 30th Assembly District 59% of the children is Latino. In the 31st Assembly District 68% of the children are Latino, and in Senate District 16 63% of the children are Latino, a fact that I know probably all of you in this room are aware of. **As we collectively across California address the issues of overweight and unfitness we will constantly be reminded, of the reality of health disparities and the importance of remembering the sizeable number of ethnic communities.**

We also provide, in the Senate Policy Brief, maps that illustrate the percentages of unfit and overweight children in the 40 senate districts here in California. The additional maps that were on your tables are the maps that represent the percentages of unfit and overweight children in each of the 80 assembly districts. Now this document provides epidemic background information on studies that have been done to date, and you can download this document as well as a companion document which looks so similar you might think in fact that we at the center had posted the same document twice. **(End of side A)...documents as well as the fact sheets can be downloaded from the center's website, and our website location is quite simply www.publichealthadvocacy.org.** In addition, we have on our website an interactive mapping capability so that if you want to know more about 5th, 7th, and 9th graders, boys and girls for example in your assembly district and your senate district, you can go to our website and use our mapping capability and obtain that information. We put this document together, and since we released the Assembly District Brief last December we have heard from individuals like those of you in this room and in other parts of the state that this document is a useful document to use with colleagues, for example, in the medical community. It is a document that has been distributed to each and every one of the 120 elected officials in Sacramento as well as their staffs. The district fact sheets can be used as a companion piece. The district fact sheet can be used to educate local officials as well as in your continuing efforts with your five members of the California legislature. **The only thing I would hasten to add as a final comment about the study is as we advocate for policies both at the local level and at the state level and to some degree**

at the federal and national level I would urge all of us to not allow elected officials to say if they look at the map, for example, oh, well, notice my district is within the first grouping and has only, say, 20%. For any of us to say, well, we don't have a problem because only 20% of our children are overweight, and if we look at other senate districts in California the percentage goes all the way up to 35%, I would just urge all of us, as I suspect all of you in the room are doing on an ongoing basis, to explain why a percentage of 20 is far too great, what that means for the children who in fact currently are overweight, and what that means for us as a community both in terms of increased healthcare demands and chronic disease that children who are overweight when they're in the 5th, 7th, or 9th, grade, what that means for their coming years.

Now I'd like to turn briefly to the second part of my talk this afternoon, which is to mention some facts about the five members of your delegation in Sacramento. They may be things that you're already aware of, and I mention them as a colleague of yours who is working with legislative staff in Sacramento and some of the realities of, for example, the California reality of term limits. Having returned from Washington D.C. where for 30 years I was a national advocate for the WIC program I have come to understand so clearly the realities of term limits. What that means for all of us that are advocates is that no sooner do we start and get involved with working with legislative staff, then elected official reach their term limits and can no longer run for reelection. I probably, like those of you in the room who are following the budget negotiations or the budget stalemate in Sacramento, have read now at least a half dozen times the comments of some members of the legislature who have said as a result of term limits there seems to be far less willingness to negotiate and to hear what the other party is in fact saying. Among your five members you have years to work with all of them with the exception of Assemblywoman Reyes who terms out, and what that simply means, that they reach the maximum number of years they can serve and can no longer serve in that body of the legislature. Assemblywoman Reyes will be termed out in 2004. Your other four members of the legislature will not term out until 2006 in the instance of Senator Poochigian and your other two assembly people will – again, this is contingent on their deciding to run for reelection and in fact being reelected –they will not term out until 2008 and your junior senator, Senator Flores, will not term out until 2010. What this also means is that if in fact among your five-member delegation to Sacramento you have developed advocates in the legislature around issues of nutrition, hunger, lack of physical activity, one then realizes if in fact they have become advocates that they have a number of years still to be advocates, and as we work hopefully more and more on a statewide basis over the coming months and next two or three years I think we will as a community have to be mindful of not only who are the current leaders in the California legislature but how long will certain members have the opportunity to serve in Sacramento representing us.

Now, among your five members– as we think about affecting state policy I think we have to be mindful of who's in leadership positions, what committees individuals are on, and what do their particular issues of priorities seem to be. Among your senators Poochigian, is the Republican Caucus chair. Florez is on the Health Committee and also a member of the Latino Caucus, which it goes without saying in both the Senate and the Assembly has enormous influence and power. Among your assembly members, Samuelian is on the Appropriations Committee. Assemblywomen Parra and Reyes are members of the Latino Caucus, and Reyes is a member of the Education and Budget Committees. Now, the committee membership becomes key in the following way. If we now look at the bills that address in some fashion or another, issues pertaining to the overweight and unfit epidemic in California, and it has already been explained that SB 677, which is Senator Ortiz's bill that will ban sodas and other sweetened beverages from California public schools that are K through middle and junior high schools, that bill is being heard. The Assembly Education Committee of which Assemblywoman Reyes is a member will convene at 1:30 this afternoon. They will not take up SB 677 at 1:30. They're going to debate and vote on something in the neighborhood of a couple dozen bills, but 677 will come up this afternoon. As you may know, as a bill makes its way through the legislative process your other three assembly members will not have an opportunity to vote on SB 677 if it is not passed by the Education Assembly Committee this afternoon, so that's the significance of

these committee assignments. **While all 120 representatives vote on bills when they finally get to their respective chambers, as a bill makes its way through the legislative process committee members have even more opportunity to shape that legislation.**

In looking at what has happened in Sacramento since January in the areas of nutrition and physical activity another bill introduced by Senator Torlakson – not SB 65 but a bill called SB 74 – gives us some indication, I think, of how very difficult it is going to be to change environmental practice here in California despite the data that shows all of us – and we have had tremendous help from the media. Probably many of you in this room work on an ongoing basis with reporters and other members of the media community here in your multi-county area – but despite the fact that overweight and obesity is now reported in the newspapers, radio, television consistently and we have a decision as we did last week where Kraft foods said, gee, in fact maybe we ought to be a bit more responsible – and I don't mean to be flip about their decision – but despite the attention to this issue we are going to have an enormously difficult time successfully changing the environment in California so that not only school children but that adults have an opportunity to change the way they eat and change the amount of physical activity they get during the day.

SB 74 would have required that 50% of foods sold in vending machines on state property – 50%, not 60%, not 75%, not 100% – a mere 50% so that all of us that went to vending machines in the state capitol or on Cal State campuses or in the Department of Health Building in downtown Sacramento we can either purchase something healthy or if we decide that we're going to ignore our common sense we could purchase something unhealthy. That bill didn't even make it out of the first committee in the senate. And I belabor this point only to remind us all that it's going to be a tough job to change the environment here in California through state policy.

As has been mentioned, SB 677 will be heard by the Assembly Education Committee this afternoon. Another important thing for us all to be mindful of is that Senator Ortiz's bill, SB 677, I would say is radically different than the bill, that same bill, that went before the Assembly Health Committee last week. I'm referring to is the fact that when the soda ban bill was heard by the Assembly Health Committee last week it was amended and high schools were removed from the bill. SB 677 as it now exists is still a significant and important bill and will make a tremendous amount of difference, I think we would all agree, in terms of elementary and middle and junior high schools. I mentioned the amending of the bill, again, just to remind us of how much additional work we have to do when, in fact, we couldn't get a majority of the members of the Health – not the Education – but a majority of members of the Assembly Health Committee to vote for a bill that would have implemented a ban of sodas and other sweetened beverages in high schools. We are optimistic that 677 as amended will be voted upon favorably by the Assembly Education Committee this afternoon. For those of you that have worked on local and state policy not to mention federal policy one always has to remind oneself that at the 11th hour something can happen, and as often as not changes are made for political reasons and often times the political reasons have little to do with the substance and importance of a bill. But we do remain optimistic.

AB 598 was heard by the Senate Education Committee this morning. We expected when I and my colleagues left our office last night based on conversations we had had with legislative staff that the Senate Education Committee would vote favorably on 598, but I also have to explain that 598 has been amended and whereas prior to the amendment, as was described at the beginning of this forum, 598 would have required school districts that use bond money for modernization having to do with plumbing it would have required those school districts to ensure that their water fountains were operable and met certain safety standards if in fact prior to the modernization they didn't have operable water fountains. The bill has now been amended and reads that the modernization of water fountains is permissible, not required, but in fact permissible, and SB 65, which has to do, as has been explained, with contracts between schools and/or school districts and beverage and food companies, that was expected to pass the Senate Education Committee this morning as well.

In closing and hopefully on a slightly more upbeat note I'd just like to mention a couple of other tools that the California Center for Public Health Advocacy are excited about providing to groups like this coalition, those of you that are individuals as well as the various organizations that you represent and work with. Also on your table was a green sheet, which is an invitation to join our network, and as a member of the network you will receive updated information on bills pertaining to physical activity and nutrition for the remaining weeks of this legislative session as well as next legislative session. If you're interested in receiving those alerts if you will complete this form you can either give it to me this afternoon, you can fax it back to the office, you can mail it to us, or you can send us an e-mail message providing this information, and we'd be delighted to then send you this information on an ongoing basis. Obviously I think it's clear that the reason for the network is to try to influence how elected officials address these issues in Sacramento. **And finally, in closing I'd like to mention that in December of this year the California Center for Public Health Advocacy will release what will become its third policy brief, and that brief will address the issue of diabetes.** Again, the analysis will be done based on legislative districts here in California. As I said when I began, it was great getting out of Sacramento/Davis, and I'm thrilled to be able to have, albeit brief, an opportunity to work with you all here, and my hats off to you for coming together month after month to say how can we tackle this problem both here in your multi-county area as well as in Sacramento. Thanks very much.

Phoua Moua: Thank you, Stephan. At this time if anybody has any questions, I'll run around with the microphone.

Participant question: Yes, we hear there's **(unintelligible)** organization but mainly on the healthcare and all the statistics showing that there's a problem, but it seems to kind of fall on deaf ears because I think when we talk to the public, many times just the public, but also our legislators it's always, well, that relates to somebody else. It just doesn't sink in. And I'm wondering, is anyone making a tie to the economy, the economic factor? I look at these three assembly districts here that I'm very much aware of, and there's a direct correlation between the economics in these districts and your rates. Obviously, the ones with the highest poverty levels have the highest things, and there's a correlation there. So my question would be what are you doing to try to get a living wage so we can raise that economic level in the area, which in turn would be a substantial assistance to your goal?

Stefan Harvey: To answer your specific question, what is the California Center on Public Health Advocacy doing to try to ensure that all Californians earn a living wage, we are not doing anything day in and day out in a concrete way but are very supportive of organizations and efforts that are doing that. The correlation you make between income and the prevalence of overweight and unfitness is a correlation we're sure exists, and my common sense tells me exactly what your common sense does, and you may have the data. In our initial study we did not have the data to look at the issue of economic status.

Ray Enscher, Healthcare for All California: With all these stats that you have here and the legislators having this before them what is the problem of not offering healthy food to kids at school? I know there is very little we can do with the cultural side as far as eating habits within the Hispanic and Asian communities, whatever ethnic group, but at school it would seem to me that they would say...is it a lobbying thing? Is the beverage company so strong with our legislators that they don't see the need to make some adjustments, particularly at the schools?

Stefan Harvey: The arguments that have been made since January strictly in the context of SB 677 are as follows: The issue of what is sold by schools and sold at schools is a local issue, and I answer your question giving you these arguments not because we think they make sense. In fact, I think all of us in this room could refute these sorts of arguments. The other issue which has just been amazing in the frequency with which it has been mentioned is that high school students ought to have

a choice. So the number of explanations that legislative staff and/or members have come up with simply on the school environment is numerous.

Phyllis Preciado, Faculty Research Fellow at the Latino Center for Medical Education and Research and faculty at UCSF Fresno: I have several comments. One is I'm going into the schools soon, into the high schools, to do some screening for type 2 diabetes looking at obesity, looking at height, weight, acanthosis, family history, etc., and I'm going to be doing research and I'm looking at how I can translate that research into policy. For example, **I know that AB 766 is looking at that as a pilot project, well, Fresno County is not included in that pilot project. Tulare County is not included in it. Tulare is number one in usage of insulin.** We have such high numbers. I'm a novice researcher, I'm a novice, you know, just out of school, etc. How do I get the tools that I need to move what I see as critical, an epidemic? How do I get to the point where we, Fresno County, can have a legislative bill just like Longville had? How do we do that? What's the process given that we have limited resources and those kinds of things? The comment, the economic tie-in with obesity and diabetes, I know you're going to be doing a legislative look at diabetes, but **it is really important to realize that the Latino community has a genetic susceptibility to type 2 diabetes that's been documented.** We have environmental factors, we have behavioral factors, we have social factors that are really impacting our community in such high numbers that for us not to take this and look at it and make it a number one issue, especially here in this valley, is wrong. High school students are being...**(end of tape 1)**...bill that high school students are being, they don't want to remove the choice to get...

Stefan Harvey: Correct.

Phyllis Preciado: I'm wondering where that's coming from. Another comment, I just have to make a comment about the comment that the gentleman made about the cultural, that we can't do anything about the cultural factors. We can do a lot of things about cultural factors. There are ways that we can become aware of different cultures and languages and institute changes in terms of education on nutrition and physical exercise. I don't think it's impossible. I think it's very possible.

Stefan Harvey: To address your first question about how do you and how does this group take research and what you know is going on in your communities and get a bill written and introduced. If I may, I'd love to let the person who's closest to the legislative process in the room...do you have any comments you'd like to share with her as to how to go about doing that?

Jeff Forbes, Representative, Office of Assembly Member Nicole Parra: Well, as far as that, I would just say we're very open to ideas. Feel free to contact our office. The legislative people up in Sacramento, that's what they do. We're willing to listen to it and sit down, always very open to ideas. It kind of takes a long, slow process in working with other groups as well and just kind of bringing everything to the table when you're ready and give us a call or give your assembly person a call and say, hey, have you ever thought about this and they might say, yeah, that's a pretty good idea and be willing to check it out. So feel free to contact us. I have a business card I'll give to you after, and we'll be glad to work with you and look into it and hopefully check it out.

Phyllis Preciado: But I've heard that. I really have. I think I'm frustrated because I think that...you know, I walk the streets a lot, so I understand how important it is for a relationship, building a partnership, building all those kinds of things, but there must be some sort of process that an individual can go through within an organization or within a group of people that is out there that I'm not aware of. I know I can call my legislator. It is very difficult to get hold of you guys. It's almost impossible unless you have a direct line.

Stefan Harvey: A couple of other suggestions, and that would be working with statewide organizations some of which or all of which may have local chapters here. The one that comes immediately to my mind is the California Chapter of the American Diabetes Association.

Phyllis Preciado: They left the area.

Stefan Harvey: They left. Okay. Bad idea. Let me throw something else out, and I'd be delighted to talk with you longer about this.

Phoua Moua: Edie and I on the Hunger and Nutrition Project have a Child Nutrition Task Group that is meeting monthly. We cancelled all our meetings for July because Edie's on vacation, but we will reconvene in August and we're starting up a steering committee with this Child Nutrition Committee looking at this issue, so I would invite all of you guys when I send out the meeting notices to come to our meeting.

Participant comment: I just wanted to make a comment related to Ray's question. Just one other factor is many times school administrators not only defend but promote the contracts for soda pop and other things of that sort because of funding issues. They say this is a primary source of funding for us and so we've got to do it, and I think that's probably a major factor.

Marion Mosley, Fresno/Madera Medical Society: I haven't read this real carefully, but I don't see anything in any of the literature that relates to the high medical cost of obesity in children. A very scanty and spotty survey was done among doctors a year ago and they came up with 14 million in medical expenses directly related to childhood obesity. That has the medical community scared to death. I think you know that about three months ago a group of us, quite a few doctors, all donned white jackets and descended upon Sacramento for the purpose of requesting the legislature not to cut Medi-Cal because already it's a problem, but if 600,000 more patients come into the uninsured section of our community that's tragic, but when you couple it with this epidemic of obesity that is costing all of us a lot of money and the money is getting shorter and shorter and there's less and less money to deal with the obesity problems of children it seems like a no-brainer that the legislature would think it wise to do everything preventative including looking after the high school children. I think there are many areas where we do not give these high school children choices. In other words, we don't give them a choice between whether they want crack or marijuana. And so I think it is unreasonable, but I personally believe that the non-nutritional food in high schools is strictly money. The high school that I dealt with – I've been very active over at Edison High School – and I think most people don't know the thousands, and I mean thousands of dollars that go to a school who will peddle Pepsi and Coca Cola. One of the issues that I'm trying to approach through the American Medical Association is to contact Coca Cola and Pepsi or to threaten a boycott or something. You either start selling water in the schools or please give us your money for the things we depend upon now or we'll boycott you. End of my sermon.

Gloria Grijalva, Community Medical Centers: I have two comments. Ray's question earlier about don't they see the problem that is being caused, don't they see the poor nutrition in the high schools, and your answer in regards to it's often a local decision as to whether they have coke machines and vending machines there. It is a local issue. Unfortunately, sometimes the administration that is making the decisions is already addicted to Coke or Pepsi themselves. It's like coffee. Many of you here need your cup of coffee before you get going in the morning, right? Pepsi and Coke are the same way. I remember a school that I worked at previously – I won't mention it – and we didn't have a vending machine there, and the sports director decided that he needed to have his Pepsi first thing in the morning when he got there so the vending machines came in. Now the added incentive of those companies giving money to schools who are in desperate need of money right now, kind of a kickback, is an added incentive. Look at our own Fresno State. They have a sole provider of, I don't remember if it's Coke or Pepsi, and they get a lot of money for selling that on campus. So the mighty

dollar speaks a lot. I'm sure they've got lobbyists who at the last minute provide campaign funds or whatever. The other issue that I'd like to comment on is how we write legislation, something Phyllis brought up. I work at Community Hospitals for Government and Community Relations. We are in the process of having to write legislation because, as all of you know, we are getting a lot of cuts through various bills at the state and federal level and our hospitals are really trying to survive and keep their heads above water. I'm sure you've seen San Luis Obispo Hospital recently went down about two weeks ago. Harvard General in Los Angeles was almost down, almost closed. Just a little side note on that, that's the most equipped hospital in the Los Angeles area to take care of us. So we're all struggling, and we're having to learn why hospitals now have government relations departments. It's because we also need money and we're learning how to work through the system, so I am part of the taskforce meeting with Phoua. I've offered to help in any kind of writing legislation because I am learning. I'm learning how to do that. And we also learned that you need to visit those offices in Sacramento. You need to pick up the phone call and find out who their people are. Thank you.

Phoua Moua: Thank you. I'm going to allow one last comment, and then I think Stephan will be here for a little bit if anyone wants to talk to her afterwards. I also want to allow time for the representative from Assembly Member Nicole Parra's Office to respond.

Ramon Gonzales with the Fresno Health Consumer Center: On the gentleman's point about the economy and what we can do and what that has to do with healthy food and fitness, at the very local level this group or a representative from this group could contact the local Employment and Training Service Provider. Every county has one – Work Force Connection here in Fresno County – so it would be **ACS or Proteus** that are providing those services, and we can get in contact with them and begin that relationship that you were talking about. And that's very specific to what we can do locally here with what you were talking about. The other one is negative media exposure. About two or three weeks before the last meeting and this week there were articles in the paper by folks from our very organization, Community Hunger and Nutrition, and in my other life, so to speak, I'm very involved with the small business, stuff like that, and there was an article where they said they were going to bring out photographs and media exposure of Fresno County and they were going to put children from third world countries and compare it to Fresno county because of the way...does anybody remember that article? Yeah. What was funny was that business people that read this said, wow, Fresno County is now a third world county. Now think about if you're wanting to attract businesses and you're wanting to attract people to Fresno County to help the very issue that we're trying to overcome that kind of exposure and publicity is not what we need, so at the very local level what we can do before we put articles like that is run them through maybe your Chamber of Commerce or your Employment and Training Service Providers because that's a good screening tool that will say, you know what, this is not going to help our cause here in Fresno County at the local level. So those are two things that we can do immediately and here at the local level that I think will help this cause.

Phoua Moua: Thank you. We're almost out of time, but I want to go ahead at this time, give Jeff from Assembly Member Nicole Parra's office a chance to respond to all the discussion today.

Jeff Forbes: Thank you. I know we're getting short on time so I just wanted to say, first, thanks everybody for having me. This was a great event, and we definitely hear your concerns. The budget situation is nothing new to everybody. Those are tough decisions that my boss and all of the members have to make. Unfortunately, the budget situation is so deep that everything is taking cuts. As far as the legislation and kind of things to do now, we're very open. Come contact us. I don't know where everybody lives. Contact your assembly members, your senators. Coming with a united voice is always a great tool, and groups such as this getting together and coming together with a policy action plan is going to show that you guys are down to business and you mean action. Bring it to the table, bring it to our table, bring it to your assembly members, and we'll try to work with you as much as possible, and please feel free to contact our office. I'm in the Hanford office. Contact our

Sacramento office and we'll be happy to work with everybody as much as possible. I'm here to show the support from Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, and you can let me know anything you want after the meeting. I will be happy to pass that along to her. I just want to show our support, and again, thanks for having me.

Phoua Moua: Thank you. I want to thank everybody for coming today. Just kind of a note on Assembly Member Nicole Parra's office, she is in support of the Universal School Breakfast Program that we have talked about before in previous forums, and her office is looking at the issue of free and reduce breakfast programs for all schools qualified for free and reduce. I also just wanted to let all of you know that although we only had one representative from our legislators here today, all five were invited formally and personally. With the budget and many bills in committee with hearings, I was told staff members were not available. Thank you for coming, and I hope to see all of you next month.