



SB 970 (De León) Streamlining Enrollment into Health and Human Service Programs

PURPOSE:

Enroll the 2.3 million Californians the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has identified as eligible for CalFresh, potentially drawing down more than \$465,000,000 in federal funding to prevent hunger and stimulate the California economy.

BACKGROUND:

According to the USDA, California has the lowest participation levels in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known in California as CalFresh) of any state. Increased enrollment would improve the health and wellbeing of low-income families.

To implement the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA), state laws were passed creating the *California Health Benefits Exchange*¹ and the Cal-HEERS—California Health Eligibility, Enrollment & Retention System,² requiring the creation of a single, accessible health insurance application and renewal process that can be accessed by phone, mail, in person or online for all state health subsidy programs.

Currently, CalFresh and the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, known in California as CalWORKs) programs are integrated with Medi-Cal and housed in the same computer system (State Automated Welfare System, or SAWS). This enables consumers to walk into a County office and fill out one application and be enrolled in all of the programs they qualify for. However, case management is now at risk of becoming separated or “de-coupled” during the creation of Cal-HEERS. There are 7 million Californians without health insurance, and in 2014, many of them will fill out an application using Cal-HEERS. These applicants will be missing out on an opportunity to apply for the other human services programs that California has to offer them for increased wellness.

This bill would solve this problem by codifying “horizontal integration” between health care and human services enrollment as encouraged by the ACA Section 1561 and would take

¹ Chapters [655](#) and [659](#), Statutes 2010 (Perez & Alquist)

² Chapter 641, Statutes of 2011 (Bonilla)

advantage of the enhanced 90% federal funding that can be used for the shared cost of horizontal integration through December 31, 2015.³

Significant federal funds are available to build the new enrollment system – 100% federal funds for the Exchange portion and 90% federal funds for the Medi-Cal portion.

CalFresh is overwhelmingly supported by the American public⁴ and permits low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet by increasing their purchasing power.⁵

PROPOSAL:

This bill would require:

- By December 2015, an applicant for or recipient of a public health coverage program (Medi-Cal, Healthy Families or Exchange) can use their application or renewal form to also apply for public benefit programs including CalWORKs and CalFresh or other human services or work support program as defined by a workgroup to be established;
- If the health coverage program renewal form has the necessary information to renew eligibility for CalWORKs or CalFresh, it will be used to satisfy the renewal requirement; and,
- CalFresh recipients who are uninsured shall, with their consent, have the information in their CalFresh case file used to file an application for health coverage.

SUPPORT: Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)

For more information, please contact: Claire Conlon, Legislative Aide, at (916) 651-4022.

(Updated 2-3-12)

³ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) jointly issued the "tri-agency letter" on Aug. 10, 2011.

http://cciio.cms.gov/resources/files/final_tri_agency_Letter_081011.pdf.pdf

⁴ <http://frac.org/frac-releases-new-polling-data-showing-overwhelming-support-for-efforts-to-end-hunger/>

⁵ <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/SNAPstrategies.pdf>