

# Floor Alert

To: Members, California State Assembly  
From: Kerry Birnbach, California Food Policy Advocates  
Date: May 31, 2012  
Subject: **Support AB 1560 (Fuentes) – Food for Health**



## Problem

Currently, only one out of every two eligible Californians participates in CalFresh; California has the lowest participation rate in the nation. Many Medi-Cal recipients are eligible for CalFresh, but don't participate. Because of the fundamental connection between health and nutrition, this bill aims to better align CalFresh and Medi-Cal eligibility, ensuring that low-income Californians get the nutrition they need to support health and well-being.

## What does AB 1560 do?

**AB 1560 streamlines CalFresh eligibility for Medi-Cal recipients and their families.** Using a strategy known as categorical eligibility, this bill removes one of two CalFresh income barriers for Medi-Cal recipients and their families. By streamlining CalFresh eligibility for Medi-Cal recipients and their families these two complementary benefits are more closely aligned.

**AB 1560 connects children in these households with free school meals.** AB 1560 will provide households with a Medi-Cal recipient better access to CalFresh benefits, and because of an existing policy known as direct certification, children in those households will also be automatically certified for free school meals.

**AB 1560 further connects health and nutrition.** In 2014, an additional 2 million Californians will become newly eligible for Medi-Cal under health care reform. Aligning these programs now can increase CalFresh participation in the future.

## Why Support AB 1560?

**AB 1560 increases CalFresh participation among current and new Medi-Cal recipients, and their families.**

- ▶ This bill would increase CalFresh participation by 227,000 Californians.
- ▶ AB 1560 will most impact working households with children that rely on Medi-Cal, and still have incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level. Currently, only 36% of eligible, low-income, working households participate in SNAP.

**AB 1560 is a fiscally responsible bill that draws down federal nutrition benefits into the state and local economies.**

- ▶ AB 1560 could bring in up to \$10 million in federal nutrition benefits to the state; USDA has shown that every dollar in SNAP (known as CalFresh in California) expenditures generates \$1.79 in economic activity.
- ▶ This bill would bring California up to speed with 27 other states that use categorical eligibility as an effective enrollment strategy.

**AB 1560 reduces duplicative applications and calculations.**

- ▶ Caseworkers will no longer need to determine CalFresh gross-income eligibility for Medi-Cal recipients and their families. Parents in these households will no longer need to fill out an application for their children to receive free school meals.

**AB 1560 provides low-income households with a package of benefits: food at home and meals at school.**

- ▶ By connecting Medi-Cal recipients and their families with CalFresh, children in those households will also be able to access free school meals without additional paperwork.

*California cannot afford to forego federal funds that would help ensure that Medi-Cal recipients and their families can easily access CalFresh to support their health and well-being.*

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For more information on AB 1560, contact Kerry Birnbach, [Kerry@cfpa.net](mailto:Kerry@cfpa.net) or 510.433.1122 x 110  
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