

Floor Alert

To: Members, California State Assembly
From: Alexis Fernandez, California Food Policy Advocates
Date: May 28, 2013
Subject: **Support AB 191 (Bocanegra) – Strengthening the Connection between CalFresh & Medi-Cal**



Opportunity

Reduced food insecurity and improved access to nutritious foods are fundamental goals of CalFresh. These objectives are also strongly linked to supporting the overall health and well-being of participants. In an effort to further the connection between nutrition and health, the link between CalFresh and other health benefits should be strengthened. Moreover, through the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, millions of low-income Californians will soon be newly eligible for Medi-Cal. There is no better time to connect low-income Californians with a comprehensive package of benefits, including CalFresh, that will truly support overall good health.

What does AB 191 do?

- ▶ **AB 191 would streamline CalFresh eligibility for Medi-Cal recipients and their families.** AB 191 would make low-income households with a Medi-Cal recipient (with gross income up to 200% FPL) categorically eligible for CalFresh, thereby removing a CalFresh income barrier. While the net income test would still apply, the gross income test would be raised from the current limit of 130% FPL to 200% FPL for categorically eligible households with a Medi-Cal recipient.
- ▶ **AB 191 would improve alignment between CalFresh and Medi-Cal.** An estimated 30 to 33 percent of Medi-Cal recipients are currently eligible for CalFresh, but 1.2 million of those Medi-Cal recipients do not participate. Improved alignment has the potential to increase CalFresh participation, boost administrative efficiency, and increase the likelihood that low-income households have access to a package of benefits that support their overall health and well-being.
- ▶ **AB 191 ensures that the original intent of the Heat and Eat program is preserved.** Recent amendments to AB 191 ensure that homeless CalFresh households are not negatively impacted by the Heat and Eat program. The intent of the Heat and Eat program is to streamline verification and increase CalFresh benefits for certain households. The amendments provide homeless households the option of participating in the Heat and Eat program if it is in their best interest to do so.

Why Support AB 191?

- ▶ **AB 191 increases CalFresh participation among current and new Medi-Cal recipient and their families.** An estimated 227,000 individuals live in a household with a Medi-Cal recipient and are net income eligible for CalFresh, but have a gross income above the current limit. Because of the gross income test these otherwise eligible households with high need and high expenses, such as child care costs, cannot access CalFresh.
- ▶ **AB 191 is a fiscally responsible bill that draws down federal benefits into the state & local economies.** AB 191 could bring in up to \$10 million in federal nutrition benefits to the state. In addition, USDA has shown that every SNAP dollar (CalFresh in California) expenditure generates \$1.79 in economic activity.
- ▶ **AB 191 emphasizes the role that nutrition plays in supporting overall health and well-being.** Because CalFresh benefits guard against food insecurity and increase access to nutritious foods, they are an important component of overall health and well-being. Stronger links between complementary programs like CalFresh and Medi-Cal ensure that California's families are able to thrive in good health.

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

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