

Floor Alert

To: *Members, California State Assembly*
From: Kerry Birnbach, California Food Policy Advocates
Date: May 31, 2011
Subject: **Support AB 69 (Beall) — CalFresh Senior Nutrition Benefits**

Problem: *Only 1 in 10 eligible seniors participates in CalFresh. Seniors frequently rely on fixed incomes and have costly medical needs- no senior should choose between buying medication or buying food. With the senior population growing rapidly, California needs a sound enrollment strategy to guarantee that seniors do not go hungry.*

What does AB 69 do?

- ▶ **Seeks to target underserved Social Security recipients for CalFresh enrollment:** *Only 1 in 20 eligible households with a Social Security recipient over 60 years old participates in CalFresh. AB 69 would have the Department of Social Services work with the Social Security Administration to target the approximately 444,000 eligible households with Social Security recipients over the age of 60.*
- ▶ **Seeks to simplify the enrollment process:** *AB 69 would develop a streamlined process for likely eligible seniors building upon the strategies used by other states to reduce paperwork and increase federal nutrition benefits. Such strategies could include the self-certification of key eligibility factors, the standardization of benefits and deductions, and the automation of the application process.*
- ▶ **Allows counties to utilize Social Security Administration information to facilitate enrollment in CalFresh:** *AB 69 allows interested counties to work with the Social Security Administration to receive information to facilitate enrollment in CalFresh.*
- ▶ **Seeks to bring in more federal nutrition benefits.** *The seniors targeted by the bill could, on average, receive nearly \$1000/year in federal nutrition benefits.*
- ▶ **Seeks to simulate the economy.** *Every CalFresh dollar spent generates \$1.79 in economic activity. California loses out on nearly five billion dollars every year as a result of low CalFresh participation; this bill would help the state economy to bring in more than \$425 million of those lost dollars.*

Why support AB 69?

- ▶ **Seniors need extra help and attention.** *Research demonstrates that seniors do not participate in CalFresh because of the burdensome application process, the difficulty of traveling to an office, and misunderstandings about eligibility and benefit amounts.*
- ▶ **AB 69 has been amended to be fiscally responsible.** *Any county can participate so long as there are no significant costs to doing so.*
- ▶ **AB 69 has broad support.** *AB 69 has wide support among grocers and growers as well the support of the public health, nutrition, senior, and anti-hunger communities.*