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Gov. Jerry Brown ends fingerprinting for food stamp recipients

October 6, 2011 | 12:15 pm

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Gov. Jerry Brown acted Thursday to eliminate the requirement that food stamp recipients in California be fingerprinted after questions were raised about its effectiveness in preventing fraud.

Brown signed a bill that terminates the Statewide Finger Imaging System for the 3.8 million Californians participating in the federally funded CalFresh program, starting Jan. 1. The bill is one of several measures signed by Brown on Thursday that aim to increase participation in programs to feed the poorest residents.

Only about half of eligible Californians receive CalFresh benefits, making California last in the nation in participation, according to Assemblyman Felipe Fuentes (D-Sylmar), the author of AB 6.

"The hunger relief package will reduce the burden on the neediest Californians to ensure that they can get the food they need," Fuentes said. The Department of Social Service has been spending about \$15 million a year on the fingerprinting program for welfare programs and has argued it has saved \$60 million in fraudulent welfare payments, based on a study done by Los Angeles County.

But opponents of the requirement cited reports by the state auditor and the U.S. Department of Agriculture questioning the validity of the study. Fuentes said there are other anti-fraud measures in place.

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A separate bill is aimed at expanding the number of food stamp recipients by allowing counties to use Social Security Administration records to identify and enroll senior citizens who are eligible for CalFresh benefits. Assemblyman James Beall Jr. (D-San Jose) is the author of AB 69.

--Patrick McGreevy

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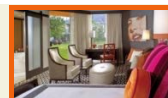
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