

For Release on November 17, 2010

Contact: Tia Shimada (510) 433-1122 ext 109

*New Analysis:*

## **Alameda County Loses Out on \$107,000,000 a Year in Federal Nutrition Benefits**

*Advocates point to persistent barriers hampering participation in the newly renamed Food Stamp Program*

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has released *"Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh Participation on State and Local Economies."* CalFresh (formerly known as California's Food Stamp Program) provides benefits to eligible, low-income Californians who cannot afford enough to eat. The report found that while CalFresh utilization has increased rapidly over the course of the recession, Alameda County is missing out on an estimated \$107,000,000 in federal benefits per year due to underutilization.

"Leaving these federal funds untapped doesn't just hurt struggling households, it hurts our economy, as well," said Tia Shimada, Nutrition Policy Advocate at CFPA and author of the report. "Every dollar in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity. Alameda County forgoes as much as \$191,000,000 in annual economic activity because of low participation in CalFresh."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has consistently ranked California among the states with the very worst participation in federal nutrition assistance. Less than half of all Californians who are eligible for CalFresh actually participate. Advocates have praised recent efforts to increase access to CalFresh, but continue to call for key improvements.

"CalFresh has been greatly improved. We have a new name, new ways to apply, and several barriers to participation have been removed," said George Manalo-LeClair, Senior Director of Legislation at CFPA. "But some persistent problems remain. We still require more paperwork than every other state in the country. Compared to just about every other state in the nation, we still require more trips, by more family members, to CalFresh offices."

Assembly Member Felipe Fuentes (D-Sylmar) will be introducing legislation to remove this excess paperwork and these excessive trips to the office. Specifically, the legislation would move California to the "simplified reporting" rules used in 49 other states and would end California's costly and redundant finger print system, which requires all adult members of CalFresh households to come into a CalFresh office to provide a print.

"We are missing out on more federal funds than other states for one reason: we put up more barriers," said Manalo-LeClair. "Knocking down these barriers would not only save Alameda County money but would also help boost the economy."

The full "Lost Dollars, Empty Plates" report can be found at: [http://cfpa.net/LDEP\\_2010/LDEP\\_2010\\_final.pdf](http://cfpa.net/LDEP_2010/LDEP_2010_final.pdf)

The estimated loss of federal benefits and associated economic activity in each of California's 58 counties can be found at: [http://cfpa.net/LDEP\\_2010/SummaryTable.pdf](http://cfpa.net/LDEP_2010/SummaryTable.pdf)