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## **New Analysis: Increased CalFresh Participation Would Bring \$24,500,000 in Federal Nutrition Benefits to Butte County**

### ***Butte Ranks 29th on the CalFresh Program Access Index***

Today, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) released its annual *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates* report, a complement to the organization's recently published Program Access Index (PAI). The PAI compares CalFresh utilization to the number of potentially eligible individuals in each county. Butte ranks 29th out of 58 counties on the index (with the first-ranked county having the highest CalFresh utilization relative to potentially eligible individuals). *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates* describes the economic effects of CalFresh utilization. If CalFresh reached all potentially eligible individuals, Butte residents would receive an additional \$24,500,000 in federally funded benefits each year. Those benefits would result in \$43,900,000 of additional state and local economic activity.

CalFresh, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is the largest source of nutrition assistance in California. The latest data from the United States Department of Agriculture show that only 63 percent of eligible Californians participate in CalFresh. Meanwhile, more than 1.8 million households in California are food insecure (unable to consistently afford enough food). Because of the low CalFresh participation rate, Californians lose out on \$2.9 billion in federal nutrition benefits each year, which would generate \$5.2 billion in additional economic activity.

California has eliminated several long-standing barriers to CalFresh participation, such as the fingerprinting requirement, the asset test, and overly restrictive limits on gross income. Many barriers still prevent eligible children, adults, and seniors from participating in CalFresh. State and local administrators should continue to improve participation, the participant experience, and administrative efficiency through the integration of CalFresh and Medi-Cal processes, statewide use of telephonic and electronic signatures, and similar practices.

- To learn more about opportunities to improve CalFresh, visit: <http://cfpa.net/calfresh>
- To access CFPA's Program Access Index visit: <http://cfpa.net/pai-2015>
- To access the *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates* report visit: <http://cfpa.net/lost-dollars-empty-plates-2015>

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California Food Policy Advocates is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.