

2018 Farm Bill Fact Sheet

Categorical Eligibility



Children's Access to Food Threatened by the Conaway Farm Bill Proposal

Many low-income parents will no longer qualify for help feeding their children if the Conaway Farm Bill moves forward. Under the proposal, states would lose the option of using categorical eligibility to streamline enrollment into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as CalFresh or food stamps) for low-income families who are struggling to make ends meet, but earn too much to qualify. If enacted, Sue a single mother who works full time as a cashier, but only earns minimum wage (\$11 per hour) would be cut of from food assistance.



Categorical eligibility is used to help low-wage working families with high costs of living qualify for help putting food on the table. Eliminating categorical eligibility would:

- Cause low-wage working families to lose help paying for food when they earn a little more take-home pay.
- Prevent families from moving towards economic security by cutting off help for those with more financial savings.
- Make it more difficult for families to qualify for help paying for food if they own a car to get to and from work.
- Increase the risk of hunger for low-income students by cutting their connection to free school meals.

What should Congress do?

Oppose the House Farm Bill proposal to end categorical eligibility. The removal of categorical eligibility is estimated to impact as few as **36,752** and as many **126,035 California households** below 200% of the poverty level, and most of these families will be working.¹

Why this Matters

Categorical eligibility works in California. It helps families as they strive to get back on their feet. Financially responsible choices like establishing modest savings and owning a reliable car to get to and from work help Californians climb the economic ladder towards self-sufficiency. Categorical eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allows people to make those choices and still afford healthy food. Categorical eligibility also increases administrative efficiency by streamlining enrollment into SNAP.

¹ This estimate is based on local assistance estimates included in the 2016-2017 Governor's Budget available at: <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/entries/localassistanceest/Jan2016/EstimateMethodologies.pdf>.