



Nourish California

SB 107 (Wiener): CalFresh—Simpler for Seniors

State Legislative Agenda 2021

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Opportunity: Simplify Access for Our Most Vulnerable

An estimated 30 percent of eligible Californians are not reached by CalFresh. That means that each year [we miss out on more than \\$2 billion in federally funded nutrition benefits](#) that could help struggling families buy the nutritious food they need. And each CalFresh dollar spent generates \$1.50 in economic activity, making it one of the most effective economic stimulus programs.

As a proven positive public health intervention and powerful economic stabilizer, CalFresh has a critical dual role to play in California's immediate and long-term COVID-19 response. Yet, [only 19 percent of eligible older Californians \(age 60 or over\) receive CalFresh](#), the lowest participation rate of any state. The state has made progress in recent years simplifying the enrollment process for older adults and people with disabilities. But one option we have not exercised is to **create a simpler, shorter application for those most vulnerable households**. Other states that have taken this option have seen increases in applications and participation.



Opportunity: Build on What Works

When the COVID-19 crisis hit and need surged, CalFresh applications skyrocketed. In response, federally authorized waivers allowed state and county administrators to simplify the complex application process and streamline other burdensome requirements. The resulting changes helped connect more than 500,000 additional households with vital nutrition assistance in just a few months.

When the federal waivers expire in 2021, we cannot afford to go backwards. One simplification we can make permanent is **allowing all CalFresh participants to complete forms that require a signature by phone**. This improvement will make it easier for people to get, and stay connected to, vital food assistance.

Legislative Action

- Simplify the CalFresh application for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Allow all CalFresh participants to complete the application and other forms that require a signature by phone.

Why this Matters

COVID-19 is exacerbating hunger and hardship, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities. We can't wait to act. Now is the time make permanent improvements to ease access to CalFresh and close the participation gap.

