

# State Legislative Agenda 2022

This agenda identifies opportunities the State Legislature can seize now to connect Californians with the food they need to thrive.

## Food4All—No Exceptions, No Exclusions

While the state economy is rebounding from the pandemic-driven downturn more quickly than anticipated, the recovery is deeply inequitable. Many Californians with low income remain out of work — and locked out of critical safety net programs.



California immigrants have been significantly impacted by the public health and economic crises, even as they continue to face additional challenges from historic and systemic discrimination. While relief efforts are underway, most federal and state safety net programs continue to leave many immigrants behind. During this public health emergency the state has taken meaningful steps toward an equitable nutrition safety net, but stronger and permanent action is needed.

California must live up to its values and remove xenophobic, exclusionary policies that lock Californians out of critical nutrition programs. We believe in food for all — no exceptions, no exclusions. When every person has the food they need, California can be a more resilient, thriving state

**ACTION:** Ensure permanent funding to provide California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) nutrition benefits to all Californians ineligible for CalFresh solely due to their immigration status.

**COSPONSOR:** California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)

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All Californians deserve fair access to nutritious, affordable food.

As the state works to rebuild and recover from the lasting effects of COVID-19 pandemic, longstanding inequities have worsened. Too many Californians still cannot safely access nutritious food and other basic needs.

Despite the progress we've made in passing some inclusive policies, we still need bold actions that transform the state's safety net system to ensure food assistance for all those who need it.

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## Food With Care: Fair Pay for Child Care Providers. Free Meals for All Kids.



California's child care providers face a per-meal pay penalty for feeding younger children. Existing state statute limits child care providers to only getting paid for 75 percent of the meals they serve to eligible low-income children.

The pay penalty results from a racist legacy of child care laws — still in place today — that undervalue and underpay labor historically performed by Black, Latina, and immigrant women. Failing to lift the pay penalty harms child care providers AND families, many of whom are ineligible for free, federally-funded child care meals.

Federal rules for child care meal programs don't reflect true need or true poverty in California. Currently, a family can qualify for subsidized child care in California, but not free meals served through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Families and child care providers take the hit financially when children don't qualify for federally-funded free meals.

California has the ability to lift the State Meal Reimbursement pay penalty AND feed all kids in child care. We have set that expectation for school meals. It's time to step up for our youngest learners. These changes would nourish kids in child care while also easing a financial burden for families and child care providers.

**ACTION:** Lift the State Meal Reimbursement pay penalty for child care meals; expand free child care meals to all kids by enabling all child care providers to receive the highest federal reimbursement rate for meals served.

**COSPONSOR:** CACFP Roundtable

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## Equitable Access to School Meals: Every Kid, Every Day



Through the 2021-22 state budget, California made the bold commitment of offering every student free breakfast and free lunch beginning in the 2022-23 school year. Nourish California was proud to support that historic initiative.

Offering free meals to all students reduces harmful stigma and helps account for true levels of poverty among California kids — levels of poverty that are driven by systemic inequities and our state's unrelentingly high cost of living. Offering free meals to all students acknowledges that nutritious food is an educational tool. School meals are a critical resource that foster health, well being, and opportunity.

The investments made by the California Legislature and Governor in 2021 set us on an incredibly promising path toward nourishing every kid, every day. Work remains to translate the transformative policy vision of free meals for all into a sustainable, on-the-ground reality.

**ACTION:** Ensure effective policies are implemented and adequate funding is allocated to reach all students with free school meals in 2022-23 and beyond.

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## Boost CalFresh Benefits by Expanding the Fruit & Vegetable EBT Pilot



CalFresh helps over 4 million people put food on the table, but the federally-set benefit levels limit participants' ability to purchase enough food to last through the month. Supplemental benefit programs provide matching dollars tied to the purchase of California-grown vegetables and fruit. These matching programs operate locally across the state to make purchasing food more affordable for Californians with low-income.

Recognizing the potential for supplemental benefit programs to fight hunger and support California agriculture, the state funded the Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot in 2018. These innovative pilots will integrate California-grown fruit and vegetable benefits into the CalFresh EBT card, which is widely accepted by food retailers statewide.

Since the pilots were funded, hunger and hardship have spiked across the state. By leveraging the pilot EBT technology that is ready to launch, the state can provide additional CalFresh benefits to many more households facing poverty and hunger. We can also ensure the pilot reaches diverse regions of the state.

**ACTION:** Expand the Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot to boost benefits for a greater number of CalFresh households.

**COSPONSOR:** SPUR, San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association

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