

A photograph of two young children, a girl with curly hair and a boy, standing in a kitchen. They are both looking down at something they are holding, possibly food. The girl is wearing a grey shirt and the boy is wearing a red shirt. A woman's arm and part of her striped dress are visible on the right side of the frame.

## Federal Legislative Agenda 2021

**This agenda identifies opportunities the California Congressional Delegation can seize to help Californians access the food they need to thrive.**

### Provide COVID-19 relief to Californians with diminished access to food

From school closures to loss of income, COVID-19 continues to dramatically decrease the resources Californians have available for food. More than [half](#) of Californians with middle and low incomes have run out of food without money to buy more. Due to historic and ongoing racial discrimination, Black and Latinx families have been hit particularly hard. New policies are needed to mitigate the scope and scale of harm.

- Boost SNAP benefits by 15% for the duration of the economic downturn to help Californians who don't have enough to eat.
- Provide economic relief to those experiencing the greatest need through measures focused on low- and moderate-income households (e.g., unemployment benefits, the Child Tax Credit, and the EITC).
- Provide emergency funding to stabilize the child care sector and public schools, including funding to support the reach of nutrition programs.
- Help women and young children in low-income households get the nutrition they need through increased investments in the WIC program.
- Fund state fiscal relief so California isn't forced to cut critical health and social services at the worst possible time.

All Californians deserve fair access to nutritious, affordable food.

Nourish California is a nonpartisan, statewide nonprofit committed to advancing policies that disrupt poverty and ensure that all Californians are well nourished. We work to mitigate the harm of racist, classist, xenophobic, and otherwise inequitable systems.

---

#### Contact

Melissa Cannon  
Senior Advocate  
[melissa@nourishca.org](mailto:melissa@nourishca.org)  
209.200.8446



## Expand free meals to all students

All children deserve to be well nourished and thrive. But over [2 million California children](#) live in households that struggle with food insecurity. During the pandemic, schools have been able to offer free meals to all students, which reduces food insecurity. This approach should be continued throughout the pandemic and beyond. Publicly funded meals provided through afterschool and summer meal programs must also be expanded to support children when they are out of school.

- Enable schools to offer free, nutritious school meals at no charge to all students through progressive policy solutions such as expanding the Community Eligibility Provision, Direct Certification, and eligibility for free school meals. ([H.R. 4684/S. 2609](#)) and [H.R. 5308/S. 2752](#))
- Expand access to free, nutritious summer and after school meals by fully funding the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children program, directing the United States Department of Agriculture to expand the pilot program to all states, and reducing or eliminating area eligibility thresholds for summer and afterschool programs. ([S. 1941/H.R. 3378](#))



## Remove barriers preventing our youngest children from accessing the nutrition resources they need for a strong start in life

Our state's federal nutrition programs fail to reach all young children in need. For example, about 500,000 children enrolled in Medicaid are presumptively eligible for WIC, but not enrolled. Additionally, only [38%](#) of the state's child care programs participate in federal child care nutrition programs. Federal policies are necessary to remove the barriers standing between our youngest learners and the food they need.

- Support the provision of nutritious meals in early care and early learning environments by increasing meal reimbursement rates; more accurately applying cost of living adjustments to meals served in family child care; reducing the area eligibility threshold from 50 to 40 percent for family child care, and creating a Community Eligibility Provision pilot program for centers. ([S. 2501](#))
- Improve children's access to the WIC program by dropping the requirement for enrolling in person and making permanent the option to remotely enroll over the phone or by video and shop online, and expanding access to the program.



## Support older adults' food access

All older Californians should have access to the food they need to age with dignity. Yet a growing number of older Californians, particularly Black and Latinx elders, have inadequate or inconsistent access to the nutritious food that supports their physical and mental health. As California's food-insecure older adult population grows in size, investments in nutrition programs must follow suit to help meet the need.

- Improve access to the Child and Adult Care Food Program by increasing meal reimbursement rates and creating a Community Eligibility Provision pilot program for adult day centers.
- Boost funding for nutrition programs that serve older adults, including the Older Americans Act nutrition programs.



## Establish adequate SNAP benefit levels that reflect the true level of need

In many California communities, eligibility criteria for federal nutrition programs do not reflect the true level of need – and neither do the level of benefits. Federal administrators have tools to address these obstacles. Congress should take action to establish adequate benefit levels.

- Boost SNAP benefits to reflect the Low Cost Meal Plan, not the outdated Thrifty Food Plan currently used for calculating SNAP benefits.
- Eliminate the cap on the SNAP shelter deduction which is currently set at \$586 and doesn't reflect California's high housing costs.
- Increase the monthly minimum SNAP benefit level from \$16 to \$30.