

# Federal Legislative Agenda 2022

**Opportunities for the California Congressional Delegation to help Californians access the food they need to thrive.**

## Provide economic relief to Californians facing the greatest needs and the starkest inequities

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in food access that are perpetuated by structural racism. Black and Latinx families have been hit particularly hard. To disrupt these harmful inequities, we need inclusive policies that provide Californians with the resources necessary to meet their most basic needs.

- Provide economic relief through measures focused on households with low and moderate incomes (e.g., unemployment benefits, Supplemental Security Income, the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit).
- Make housing more affordable through measures focused on those facing the greatest need, including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness (e.g., housing vouchers for rental assistance, utility assistance).

## Remove barriers & boost benefits for SNAP/CalFresh

CalFresh (known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) helps approximately four and a half million Californians purchase food and stretch their household budgets to secure other basic resources. But eligibility criteria and benefit levels for the program are antiquated. Congressional action is needed to connect Californians with basic food resources and respond to the true level of need across our state.

- Boost benefits to reflect the Low Cost Meal Plan, not the still inadequate Thrifty Food Plan currently used for calculating SNAP/CalFresh benefits.
- Eliminate the cap on the SNAP/CalFresh shelter deduction which is currently set at \$586 and doesn't reflect California's extraordinarily high housing costs.

All Californians deserve fair access to nutritious, affordable food.

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

### Contact

Angeles Nelson  
[angeles@nourishca.org](mailto:angeles@nourishca.org)  
619.884.3541



- Eliminate the punitive, counterproductive three-month SNAP/CalFresh time limit for adults who do not have dependents and are seeking full-time work.
- Support equitable, healthy learning experiences for all by acknowledging that pursuit of a college degree is work. Effectively eliminate the work time requirements that keep college students from accessing SNAP/CalFresh.
- Remove the five-year bar and other barriers that deny lawfully present immigrants access to federally funded services, including SNAP/CalFresh.
- Remove the unjust lifetime ban that keeps individuals with prior drug felony convictions from accessing SNAP/CalFresh. Allow individuals who are incarcerated to apply for SNAP/CalFresh within 30 days prior to their release.
- Permanently authorize the standard medical deduction for SNAP/CalFresh to better serve older adults with complex medical needs and individuals with disabilities.



## Expand free meals to all students

All children deserve to be well nourished and thrive. But more than 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, bolstering access to much-needed nutrition. This approach should continue throughout the pandemic and beyond. To give children consistent, year-round access to nutritious meals, Congress should also expand afterschool and summer nutrition programs.

- Enable schools to offer free, nutritious school breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students.
- Fully fund the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program, directing the United States Department of Agriculture to expand the pilot program to all states.
- Make meals available to more children in need by reducing or eliminating area eligibility thresholds for summer and afterschool nutrition programs.
- Maintain much-needed flexibility in school meal programs to better nourish children throughout the full course of the pandemic and the challenging times that will follow.



## Support older adults' access to food

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 nutritious food that supports physical and mental health. As the number of food-insecure older Californians grows, investments in nutrition programs must follow suit to help meet the need.

- Boost funding for — and support access to — nutrition programs that serve older adults (e.g., the Older Americans Act nutrition programs; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program).



## Connect families with young children to food resources

Throughout California, federally funded nutrition programs fail to reach young children in need. For example, an estimated 500,000 children enrolled in Medicaid/Medi-Cal are presumptively eligible for WIC, but not enrolled. Additionally, fewer than four in 10 child care programs in California participate in federal child care nutrition programs. Federal policies are necessary to remove the barriers standing keeping our youngest learners from the food they deserve.

- 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.
- Address gaps in WIC nutrition assistance for pregnant and postpartum mothers, infants, and young children by extending postpartum eligibility to two years and child eligibility up to age six.
- Improve access to WIC by permanently enacting the option to enroll remotely by phone or video and allowing remote benefit issuance through EBT technology.
- Remove barriers, ensure equitable options, and modernize WIC by allowing online ordering, shopping, and home delivery for all participants.