

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 full funding to provide California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) benefits to Californians of *all* ages who are ineligible for CalFresh solely due to their immigration status. SB 464 (Hurtado) and state budget request (Hurtado & Santiago).

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.



The 2021-22 state budget included a historic investment in school nutrition that will allow schools to serve free meals to all California K-12 students. However, the same guarantee is not extended to our youngest learners in preschool and child care.

Underlying federal rules for child care meal programs don't reflect California's true level of poverty—keeping many children from accessing nutritious, affordable meals. For example, a family of four must make less than \$34,060 a year in order for a child care center to serve a free meal.

Child care providers take the hit financially for federal rules that don't take into account California's high cost of living. Each year, providers absorb tens of millions of dollars in costs for meals served to children who don't qualify for free meals, but who need them all the same.

The harm to children and the burden on providers is exacerbated by state policies that financially penalize child care providers for feeding younger children. Existing statute creates a pay penalty that limits providers to only 75% of the state reimbursement for meals served. The pay penalty is the result of a racist legacy of child care laws—still in place today— that undercompensate labor historically performed by Black, Latina, and immigrant women.

ACTION: Expand free child care meals to all kids by enabling all child care providers to receive the highest federal reimbursement rate for meals served. SB 1481 (Becker) and state budget request.

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. AB 2153 (Arambula) and state budget request (Arambula & Wiener).

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

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