



2023 Federal Agenda

This agenda identifies policies that are immediately actionable through legislative change.

Bold actions for the California Congressional Delegation and the Federal Administration to strengthen the safety net and protect the nutrition programs that help Californians thrive.

We envision a California where everyone thrives and has equitable access to food, resources, and opportunity.

As Californians continue to face the devastating health and economic effects of the pandemic and the inflation, California is facing the loss of COVID-19 federal support, a looming [recession](#), and a projected \$22.5 billion budget [deficit](#). These hardships have a [greater impact](#) on households with low income, families with children, immigrants, and the Black and Latino [communities](#).

Decisive actions by the California Congressional Delegation can strengthen the safety net, build on improvements tested during the pandemic, and protect the nutrition programs that support the well-being of all Californians.

All Californians deserve to be well nourished and thrive.

Our team at Nourish California is working with the federal legislature, the Biden administration, partners, and community members to secure bold actions that tackle the alarming, persistent rates of hunger and hardship across our state.

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Pass an equitable Farm Bill that removes barriers and boosts nutrition benefits

CalFresh/SNAP helps prevent [poverty](#) and [food insecurity](#) for nearly five million children, adults, and those 60 and older in California. The expiration of COVID-19 CalFresh/SNAP emergency allotments in April 2023 will drastically cut nutrition assistance for Californians struggling to put food on the table. CalFresh households will lose \$95 in benefits each month with some participants seeing their benefits [reduced](#) from \$281 per month to only \$23. This benefits cliff and other unnecessary barriers threaten the well-being and food security of millions of people across our state.

The 2023 Farm Bill can address the true level of need across our state, mitigate the unprecedented benefit cliff, and help connect more Californians with basic food resources.

Congress should:

- Increase the monthly minimum CalFresh/SNAP benefit level.
- Calculate benefits based on the Low-Cost Meal Plan, not the still inadequate Thrifty Food Plan.
- Increase or eliminate the \$586 ceiling on the CalFresh/SNAP shelter deduction, to realistically account for housing costs.
- Remove the punitive, ineffective three-month CalFresh/SNAP time limit for adults who do not have dependents and are seeking full-time work.
- Eliminate the work-time requirements that keep college students from accessing CalFresh to help meet their basic needs.
- Eliminate discriminatory barriers, including the five-year restriction, that prevent lawfully present immigrants from access to federal programs such as CalFresh/SNAP.
- Remove the unjust, lifelong restriction that prevents individuals with past drug-related felonies from participating in CalFresh/SNAP.
- [Reduce food insecurity](#) and support successful transitions by allowing individuals who are incarcerated to apply for CalFresh/SNAP within 30 days of their release.





Invest in school meals and Summer EBT

All children deserve to be well nourished and thrive. Every student attending a California public school is now guaranteed access to breakfast and lunch [free of charge](#) each school day. Our state stepped up to invest in this historic change. Congress should also commit to strengthening and sustaining nutrition programs for children in school and beyond. Children need consistent, year-round access to nutritious meals: Summer EBT is a critical, effective step toward meeting those needs. California should opt into the permanent Summer EBT program to ensure more children have access to meals year-round.



Congress should:

- Reach more children and sustain universal free meal programs by increasing the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) multiplier, lowering the enrollment threshold, and making Medicaid/Medi-Cal direct certification permanent.
- Expand year-round access to nutritious, affordable food by supporting the implementation of Summer EBT through increased federal funding for state administration of the program and flexibilities for timely implementation.
- Better meet the needs of communities by reducing or eliminating area eligibility thresholds that determine where summer and after-school nutrition programs can operate.

Ensure families with infants and young children have access to the nutrition they need

Infants, young children, and postpartum parents have critical nutritional needs for health and development. WIC reaches nearly [one million](#) infants, young children, and postpartum parents in California with valuable nutrition resources. Changes instituted since the onset of the pandemic have increased the positive impact of WIC and should continue. With smart, timely changes to child care nutrition programs, we can do more to reach our youngest learners with the food they need to thrive in early care and early learning settings.

Congress should:

- Extend postpartum eligibility to two years and child eligibility up to age six.
- Continue what works by permanently enacting options for remote WIC enrollment and remote benefit delivery.
- Equitably modernize WIC by allowing online ordering, shopping, and home delivery for all WIC participants.
- Invest in early care and early learning environments: increase meal reimbursement rates; more accurately apply the cost of living adjustments to meals served in family child care, reduce the area eligibility threshold from 50% to 40% percent for family child care, and create a Community Eligibility Provision pilot program for centers.



Ensure Infants have prompt and appropriate access to safe, affordable, and nutritious first foods

The [nationwide formula shortage](#) has left California families without ready access to the nutrition they need for their infants. The formula shortage has been devastating for [families with low income](#) who rely on WIC benefits. Other emergencies and disasters such as wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and high heat, impact families'

ability to [feed their infants and young children](#). In order to safeguard and improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of all California children, we need effective and inclusive disaster planning and strategies for emergencies that address the unique needs of families with infants and young children, regardless of their feeding method.

Congress should:

- Guarantee families can access safe, affordable formula and water.
- Ensure parents have the necessary supplies and support from healthcare providers and at the workplace to meet their breastfeeding/chestfeeding goals.
- Improve access to donor human milk for infants who are health compromised.
- Support online purchases of formula with WIC benefits.

Support older adults' access to food

A growing number of older Californians, especially Black and Latino elders, have inadequate or inconsistent access to [nourishing food](#). As the number of [food-insecure older Californians](#) grows, investments in nutrition programs must adjust to help meet the real needs and alleviate the benefits cliff and the sharp increase in food prices. The rising cost of food hurts older adults with [fixed and low incomes](#). Only 19% of eligible adults 60 and over receive CalFresh benefits in [California](#), by removing barriers to participation in this program and increasing the minimum benefit Congress can help reduce food insecurity in this population.

Congress should:

- Increase access and boost funding for nutrition programs that serve older adults (e.g., SNAP/CalFresh, the Older Americans Act nutrition programs, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program).
- Establish a pilot program to address hunger among older individuals and adults with disabilities.