

2024 State Legislative Agenda

Food4All: No Exceptions. No Exclusions. No Delays.

Immigrants are explicitly and unjustly shut out of the most effective anti-hunger programs: CalFresh and its state-funded counterpart, the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) (1). This systemic discrimination only worsens inequities in health and wealth (2), and hinders California's ability to weather economic downturns (3). Immigrant communities continue to be among the lowest paid workers in California (4). Now is the time to bring equity to our food safety net and eliminate racist, xenophobic policies.

ACTION: Without delay, expand food benefits through CFAP to all income-eligible Californians who are excluded from CalFresh solely due to their immigration status.

COSPONSOR: California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)

All Californians deserve access to nutritious food and other basic needs.

Our team at Nourish California is working with the state legislature, the Newsom 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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Food With Care: Fair Pay for Child Care Providers. Healthy Meals for Our Youngest Learners.

All children deserve to be well nourished and thrive. But California fails to fairly invest in nourishing our youngest learners and supporting child care providers. State law perpetuates an inequitable gap that keeps certain providers from receiving the full state reimbursement for meals served to children in their care. This gap means home-based child care providers receive no state funding for one out of every four meals they serve. California's child care system undervalues and underpays essential labor historically performed by Black, Latina, and immigrant women (5). Ending the reimbursement gap is one important step toward eliminating those inequities.



ACTION: Bring equity to child care nutrition programs by eliminating the reimbursement gap that discriminates against providers in family child care homes.

COSPONSOR: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Roundtable

Boost CalFresh Benefits by Expanding the Fruit & Vegetable EBT Pilot

CalFresh helps more than five million people put food on the table (6). But federal benefit levels limit purchasing power, especially in the face of California's relentlessly high cost of living. For the majority of CalFresh participants, benefits do not last through the whole month (7).

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. Since the pilot was funded, the number of Californians relying on CalFresh has risen by over one million individuals (8). California can respond to the need for more nutrition assistance by building on the recently launched pilot.

ACTION: Extend the Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot to ensure the pilot remains viable and boosts benefits for more CalFresh households as hunger continues to rise.

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



Invest in Safe Drinking Water and Food Security

More than one million Californians lack access to safe drinking water (9). Latine, rural, and under-resourced communities are disproportionately affected (10). The lack of safe drinking water is a threat to food security.

When households that participate in CalFresh are forced to spend limited grocery dollars to purchase bottled water, they have less to spend on the food they need. Recognizing this dire situation, the state launched the CalFresh Safe Drinking Water Pilot in March 2022, providing \$50 per month to more than 4,000 households in select zip codes that lack access to safe drinking water.

While long-term solutions are necessary, California communities need access to safe drinking water right now. A one-time allocation in the state budget will keep the existing pilot from sunseting too soon and ensure it continues to reach existing participants.

ACTION: 1) Extend the CalFresh Safe Drinking Water Pilot to avoid cutting benefits for CalFresh households harmed by the lack of safe drinking water 2) Conduct a feasibility study for eventual expansion to additional impacted counties.



Increase the CalFresh Minimum Benefit

More than an estimated five million Californians experienced a devastating cut to their CalFresh benefits when federally funded emergency (pandemic) allotments ended in March 2023. The average CalFresh household lost \$81 per month. More than one in 10 households saw their benefits slashed from \$281 to \$23 per month (11). Increasing the minimum CalFresh benefit is one way to help mitigate this loss.

California can – and should – join the several other states (12) that have already taken this action to help prevent poverty and food insecurity (13).

ACTION: Supplement federal funding to guarantee a minimum CalFresh benefit of \$50 per month, and index the new minimum amount to the Consumer Price Index for Food at Home.

COSPONSOR: California Association of Food Banks



Thriving Transitions: CalFresh Pre-release Access Legislative Proposal

Existing federal regulations (14) impose a restrictive barrier on incarcerated individuals, rendering them ineligible for CalFresh benefits after 30 days of confinement. Individuals with a history of incarceration consistently report heightened levels of food insecurity. To address this issue comprehensively, it is imperative to remove federal hurdles to SNAP/CalFresh eligibility.

This pivotal step serves as the initial phase in the establishment of a statewide reentry process that integrates CalFresh, Medi-Cal, SSI, and various other supportive resources to provide a more effective and encompassing reentry support system. The current waiver, confined to a single county, is based on a model implemented two decades ago. The state is mandated to release individuals from jails and youth detention centers after completing a Medi-Cal application and not linking CalFresh to this process is a costly and harmful missed opportunity.

ACTION:

- 1) Seek a modification of the current Orange County waiver to allow applications from all jails and California Corrections and Rehabilitation facilities in all 58 counties to be received and processed;
- 2) Implement County-specific Demonstration project waivers or requests necessary to: a) Delay Prisoner Verification up to 5 months and b) field test a Medi-Cal/CalFresh combined application;
- 3) Create an advocate workgroup to build a state reentry process incorporating all the resources necessary for a thriving transition.

LEAD SPONSORS: All of Us or None/Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, Justice in Aging, Root & Rebound



Citation

- (1) <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-health-outcomes-and-lower-health-care-costs>; <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
- (2) <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/undocumented-mixed-status-families-are-blocked-from-food-support/>
- (3) <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-case-for-boosting-snap-benefits-in-next-major-economic-response>
- (4) <https://thegepi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GEPI-Double-Disadvantage.pdf>
- (5) <https://hechingerreport.org/the-racist-and-sexist-roots-of-child-care-in-america-explain-why-the-system-is-in-shambles/>
- (6) Source: CDSS CalFresh Data Dashboard, available at: public.tableau.com/app/profile/california.department.of.social.services/viz/CFdashboard-PUBLIC/Home?publish=yes
- (7) <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/benefit-redemption-patterns-fy-2017>
- (8) Source: CDSS CalFresh Data Dashboard, available at: public.tableau.com/app/profile/california.department.of.social.services/viz/CFdashboard-PUBLIC/Home?publish=yes
- (9) <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4294>
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Source: Analysis prepared by Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, available upon request.
- (12) Currently, New Jersey, Maryland, and the District of Columbia provide a state supplement to the SNAP minimum benefit.
- (13) Source: Public Policy Institute of California, <https://www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/>
- (14) [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-273/section-273.1#p-273.1\(b\)\(7\)\(vi\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-273/section-273.1#p-273.1(b)(7)(vi))

