



January 13, 2010

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Facsimile: 916-319-2147

The Honorable John A. Pérez
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Facsimile: 916-319-2146

Re: Opposition to Governor's Budget Proposal

Dear Speaker-Elect Pérez and President Pro Tempore Steinberg,

California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) is writing to express our alarm and strong opposition to the Governor's recent budget proposals for CalWORKs, SSI, CFAP and other programs impacting low-income seniors and families. These cuts would force innumerable low-income seniors and families to seek assistance from an already-stretched network of food banks. While we appreciate the severity of the state's fiscal crisis, we believe there are smarter and more balanced ways to address the fiscal crisis that your Committee should consider.

As you consider measures to address further shortfalls, you must protect from further harm the working families and seniors often served by food banks. We understand that you will have to make tough choices regarding the state budget, but programs for those most in danger of hunger absolutely should not be cut any further. CAFB requests that you not dismantle the core benefit infrastructure we have built to serve low income families.

The Governor's Proposed Cuts

CAFB urges you to reject the Governor's budget proposals which would further harm the most vulnerable citizens of our state. We ask you to:

Reject Elimination of CFAP

The Administration again proposes to eliminate the California Food Assistance Program (state funded Food Stamps for immigrants) that was created by Governor Wilson after the federal government eliminated assistance for immigrants. 23,700 persons would lose their food assistance and \$30 million would be cut from the economy.

Oppose Reducing CalWORKs Grants by 15.7 Percent

The Governor's proposed cut would reduce the maximum monthly grant for a family of three from \$694 to \$585, a \$109 a month cut. This will be on top of the February

2009 budget agreement, which reduced CalWORKs grants by 4 percent. Not only will this cause hardship and homelessness for many families, it will reduce the amount of funds the state can receive from any federal stimulus.

Reject Further Cuts to SSI/SSP

Hunger among seniors receiving SSI/SSP – many of whom live alone and are not allowed to receive food stamps – is a major concern. The Governor’s proposal would reduce maximum SSI/SSP grants for elderly and disabled individuals from \$845 per month to \$830 per month, the federal minimum. This would be the fourth cut in a year for SSI recipients.

Reject Elimination of CAPI

The Governor again proposes elimination the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI). CAPI provides state-funded cash assistance to elderly and disabled legal immigrants who are not eligible for SSI/SSP grants solely due to their immigration status.

The Governor also proposes to implement additional spending cuts if the state does not receive \$6.9 billion in additional federal funds assumed in the proposed 2010–11 Budget. Regardless of the amount of additional federal funding received, we ask you to:

Reject Administration’s Proposal to Eliminate CalWORKs

CAFB is extremely troubled at the CalWORKs proposals from the Schwarzenegger Administration. If California eliminates the CalWORKs programs it would leave at least 1.3 million Californians without cash assistance, child care and any opportunity to get the education and training they need to move out of poverty. In doing so, the state will leave billions in federal dollars in Washington and forego any further federal stimulus funds.

Overall, California’s budget crisis can not be solved by cuts alone, especially cuts that fall on the poor children, seniors, disabled people, and families who need help to put food on the table. We urge you to reject the harshest of these proposals and pursue a more balanced solution to our State’s fiscal needs.

Sincerely,

Sue Sigler
Executive Director