Over seven million Californians cannot afford the food they need and require assistance to access healthy food. Food banks help by providing emergency food and by partnering with state and federal nutrition programs. The California Association of Food Banks represents 42 food banks working together to build a well-nourished California.

Improve Access to Healthy Food
California can help achieve a proportional response to hunger by using public policy to support private-sector efforts to close the hunger gap, and by shoring up the state’s emergency food network.

AB 515 (Eggman) The Farm to Family Tax Credit
California’s agricultural industry leads the nation, yet more than 6 million Californians, including one in four children, suffer from food insecurity. AB 515 (Eggman) would increase access to healthy foods for low-income Californians while preventing excess foods from going to waste by:

- Supporting access to complete nutrition, including expensive items that are difficult to access, by making donations meat, dairy, rice, beans, eggs and other foods eligible for the credit.
- Encouraging donations by valuing foods on 20% of their wholesale value instead of the current inventoried valuation that effectively excludes many donors.
- Providing certainty to food bank donors by extending the sunset to 2024.

Increase Funding for the State Emergency Food Assistance Program
The State Emergency Food Assistance Program (SEFAP) was put into statute by AB 152 (Fuentes) in 2011, and funded at $1 million in 2013 & 2014 through Assembly donations. Several of our peer states have made significant investments in assisting low-income residents with accessing healthy food. California food banks need our state to provide ongoing support to meet the need for food assistance. SEFAP also helps California’s farmers because all SEFAP purchases must be healthy California foods.

- Increase access to fresh and healthy California-grown foods for low-income Californians by appropriating $5 million in General Funds to the State Emergency Food Assistance Program for food banks to purchase and distribute healthy California food to low-income communities.

Modernize and Simplify the CalFresh Program
CalFresh (formerly food stamps) is California’s number one nutrition and anti-hunger program. It provides 100 percent federally-funded benefits to some 4 million Californians - most of them children. California has one of the lowest participation rates, annually losing $4.9 billion in federal funds and $8.7 billion in economic activity as a result. These bills would improve access to this critical program:

- **SB 297 (McGuire): Streamlining CalFresh Eligibility Determination:** Provides guidance to counties for processing electronic signatures, & establishes a state data hub to store electronic voice signatures from CalFresh telephone applications.
- **AB 608 (Gordon):** Requires child nutrition and feeding programs such as summer meal sites to the list of resources that must be provided to CalFresh applicants with children.
- **AB 1321 (Ting, Bonta):** Establishes a grant making program to double the value of nutritional assistance benefits such as CalFresh and WIC at farmers markets and corner stores.
- **SB 306 (Hertzberg):** Requires all counties to participate in the CalFresh Employment &Training program, and directs counties to find placement for every able-bodied adult that requests it.
- **SB 708 (Mendoza):** Supports families to easily and privately apply for the school lunch program online, and connects families to key nutrition and anti-hunger programs like CalFresh & WIC.
Address the Root Causes of Hunger
Our state has key opportunities to help build an inclusive economy in which every Californian can access nutritious foods by supporting themselves and their families.

- **AB 1240 (Bonta, Thurmond):** Reduces childhood hunger, and improves children’s health and academic success by requiring high-need schools to offer breakfast after the bell.
- **SB 23 (Mitchell):** Removes the Maximum Family Grant rule in CalWORKs.
- **SB 3 (Leno, Levy):** Raises the minimum wage to $11 an hour in 2016 and to $13 an hour in 2017, after which the wage annually adjusts based on inflation to prevent wages from eroding.
- **AB 43 (Stone):** Establishes a refundable state Earned Income Tax Credit, a proven anti-poverty strategy that also creates incentives for work.
- **AB 292 (Santiago):** Ensures students have enough time to eat during the school day.
- **SB 4 (Lara):** Provides health coverage to all Californians.
- **SB 38 (Liu):** Establishes a state Earned Income Tax Credit, with outreach to aid use of the credit.
- **SB 608 (Liu):** Enacts the Right to Rest Act, protecting those without shelter in public spaces, including eating or sharing food.

State Budget: Rebuild and Reinvest in California's Safety Net
Vital health and human services programs that provide a safety net for low-income Californians were cut by some $15 billion during the recession. We now have a significant budget surplus and should reinvest in our programs that help reduce hunger, including SSI/SSP, CalWORKs, IHSS and child care.

- **Raise SSI/SSP grant levels to the Supplemental Poverty Measure and reinstate the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).** Currently, our seniors and disabled rely on food banks as grant levels trap them at 90% of the Federal Poverty Level, leaving no money to purchase food. In many counties, SSI/SSP recipients make up 25-30% of those in need of food. As SSI/SSP recipients cannot receive CalFresh, this population is particularly at risk for hunger, and reinvestment in the program is essential.

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*The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well-nourished California. To accomplish this mission, the membership of 42 food banks focuses on increasing the visibility of hunger and its solutions, assisting Californians in accessing food assistance and nutrition programs, distributing fresh produce through the Farm to Family program, and influencing public policy.*