

# Assembly Bill 1022

## California Anti-Hunger Response and Employment Training Act of 2019

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (AD-15)

### THIS BILL

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AB 1022 will establish the California Anti-Hunger Response and Employment Training (CARET) program to fight hunger and support work among individuals who have been determined ineligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

### THE ISSUE

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Four million Californians currently receive SNAP (CalFresh) nutrition assistance. CalFresh is the state's most effective anti-hunger program, supporting the health of our low-income communities while also creating jobs and benefitting our state's food economy.

In 1996, federal welfare reform implemented strict time limits for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) receiving SNAP benefits. ABAWDs are CalFresh recipients ages 18 to 49 without dependent children, who are considered fit to work. Someone with ABAWD status is time limited to just three months of CalFresh within a 36-month period unless they:

1. Live in a state or county with an ABAWD waiver;
2. Work an average of 20 hours each week or participate in a qualifying employment and training program or workfare activity;
3. Are granted an individual exemption.

Due to declining unemployment rates, California lost its statewide waiver in 2018. While the majority of the state's estimated 570,000 ABAWDs currently live in areas that have waivers, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo have already been required to reinstate ABAWD time limits. Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin counties will lose their waivers in mid-2019. The federal administration has proposed a rule to eliminate

ABAWD waivers for all but three California counties, drastically restricting state flexibility to protect this highly vulnerable population.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that individuals likely to be cut off by the three-month limit have average monthly income of approximately 17 percent of the federal poverty level and typically qualify for no other income support.

### SOLUTION

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AB 1022 will establish the CARET program to create an equivalent state-funded nutrition benefit for individuals who lose eligibility for federally-funded CalFresh due to the ABAWD time limit. It will also allow this population to continue accessing CalFresh Employment and Training programs to support work. Additionally, this bill will direct the Department of Social Services to issue guidance to maximize use of the individual waivers available in federal law.

Hunger never makes any person better able to prepare for work, secure a job, or succeed at their place of employment, and this bill provides support to individuals who would lose eligibility of CalFresh and helps ensure that these individuals are supported to persevere during hard times.

### SUPPORT

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- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
- Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano (Co-Sponsor)
- Alameda County Community Food Bank (Co-Sponsor)
- California Association of Food Banks (Co-Sponsor)
- Bay Area Legal Aid (Co-Sponsor)

- Public Interest Law Project (Co-Sponsor)

## **CONTACT**

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