AB 1770 (Alejo):
Lawfully Present Immigrant Hunger Prevention Act
As Amended in Assembly, March 17, 2016
Last updated: April 13, 2016

PURPOSE OF THE BILL
Under existing law, the CalFresh provides nutritional assistance to certain legally eligible California immigrants who are not eligible for federal the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

AB 1770 would expand CalFresh eligibility to all California immigrants who are lawfully present in the United States.

PROBLEM & NEED FOR THE BILL
Existing federal law, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), provides nutrition assistance to qualified individuals. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), commonly known as federal “welfare reform.” The 1996 welfare law severely restricted SNAP eligibility for immigrants. Congress later restored nutrition assistance to some, but not all, immigrants.

In order to adapt to this change and prevent hunger in the state, in 1997 California established a state-funded nutritional assistance supplement for immigrants who lost federal SNAP eligibility after welfare reform. These immigrants include the following:
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR)
- Individuals paroled into the US for humanitarian reasons
- Survivors of domestic violence and other serious crimes

As a result, CalFresh currently provides access to nutritional assistance for many California immigrants.

However, certain immigrant Californians are still ineligible for CalFresh. This group includes immigrants present under immigration categories that did not exist in 1997, such as those approved under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA). It also excludes longtime residents who are applying for legal permanent residence under certain pathways.

One in 4 Californian children experience hunger, and nearly 5 million Californians experience food insecurity. Our state has the largest immigrant population in the country, approximately 10.5 million people comprising 27% of the state population. If we are to make a meaningful reduction to hunger in California, the solutions we seek must be inclusive of our immigrant population, most of whom are part of in working families.

Ending hunger among lawfully present immigrants is not only a moral thing to do; it would also help stimulate state and local economies. According to the USDA, every $5 in financial assistance generates $9 in economic activity. And every $1 billion in SNAP benefits allows approximately 14,000 Americans to keep their jobs, according to the Economic Research Service (ERS).

WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO
Expand CalFresh eligibility to immigrant individuals who are lawfully present in the United States, including individuals present under:
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Deferred Action (including childhood arrivals granted relief under DACA)
- Applications for adjustment to lawful permanent residence (with approved family visa petitions)
- An order of supervision

SUPPORT
California Immigrant Policy Center (sponsor)
Western Center on Law and Poverty (sponsor)
ACLU CA
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
CA Catholic Conference
CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Coalition of Humane Immigrant Rights of LA
Coalition of CA Welfare Rights Organizations
Friends Committee on Legislation CA
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network

BILL STATUS
Approved by the Assembly Committee on Human Services, 5-2 – April 12, 2016

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