

# CHAD MAYES

MEMBER FOR THE 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



## **AB 534 (Mayes/Aguiar-Curry/Arambula) Fact Sheet Envision a Hunger Free California Act of 2019**

### **PURPOSE OF THE BILL**

AB 534 establishes a working group responsible for drafting broad-based plans for a hunger free California. Specifically, it brings together food system stakeholders to engage and collaborate at the local, regional, and state levels to remove barriers to adequate, nutritious food choices and ensures that a vibrant and sustainable food system is available across all communities statewide.

Even in a time of economic growth, 1.7 million California children are facing food insecurity. This is primarily a symptom of poverty, which prevents access to nourishing food choices. Providing children and young adults with a healthy start will help improve learning outcomes while reducing lifetime healthcare costs. However, beginning to meet the dietary needs of children is only one aspect of this legislation that will help break the cycle of poverty. By identifying the barriers to accessing nutritious food for all Californians, AB 534 helps ensure the basic requirements for a healthy lifestyle are accessible to all.

### **SUMMARY**

AB 534 directs the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), with the consultation of a robust stakeholder group, to jointly develop a plan to for a hunger-free California and distribute this plan to the Legislature by January 1, 2021. At a minimum, this plan would:

- Contemplate a comprehensive statewide child hunger amelioration plan, including a universal school feeding program and a summer lunch EBT program serving children in food deserts. The plan must measure outcomes such as increased time spent in school through enrollment, attendance, and reduced drop-out rates, as well as an increase in cognition and improved learning and better health outcomes and fewer days of school missed due to illness;
- Report to the Assembly Select Committee on Campus Climate progress made by UC, CSU and Community Colleges to develop systems that allow EBT cards to be used on campus.
- Identify food deserts and provide maps of these areas to be available online;
- Identify barriers for retailers to locate in food deserts or other locations;
- Identify infrastructure needs, conduct an inventory of state-owned property suitable for food hub locations, including state fairgrounds;
- Subject to a budgetary appropriation, provide grants to enhance rural economies through rural-urban connections strategies;
- Encourage the use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) at farmers markets, retailers in a food desert, or retailers that could ship to a food desert, for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.

## **BACKGROUND**

California can reduce food insecurity among our vulnerable populations. California produces over one-third of the country's vegetables, and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts but does little to address the limited statewide access to quality food right here in California, which effects those near the poverty line, cash poor college graduates, working families, single parents, and communities of color. With services that can deliver fresh and affordable produce to anyone in California, there is no reason low-income individuals should be forced to shop at gas stations. Addressing food insecurity will improve the lifestyle of children and poor families, make healthcare cheaper, and increase the earning potential for millions of Californians to lift them out of poverty.

California's diverse geography and demographics unfortunately promote the prevalence of food deserts that limit food access for hundreds of thousands of California residents, and the high health risks associated with them. High-cost and congested areas of the state also experience limited access to quality food and can provide little incentives for food businesses to relocate to these "food poor" areas.

AB 534 will provide the forum for officials whose administrative policy making impacts various parts of the food system to hear from stakeholders within the system, reimagine the way things work, and to launch an action plan that will improve the distribution of fresh produce and help low-income consumer's access food, so that one day, we will be a hunger-free California.

## **SUPPORT**

Western Center on Law and Poverty, *co-sponsor*

California Association of Food Banks, *co-sponsor*

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, *co-sponsor*

No Kid Hungry, *co-sponsor*

California Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Riverside County Board of Supervisors

## **NO OPPOSITION ON FILE**