

SB 285 (Wiener): CalFresh Connect



Opportunity

Despite the economic and agricultural riches of California, more than 4.1 million low-income households are food insecure.

CalFresh, our largest nutrition and anti-poverty program, has the greatest poverty reduction impact among social service programs.

However, three in ten eligible households don't gain access to CalFresh. While California has been slowly and steadily improving, we are still among the lowest-performing states at connecting struggling households to federal food assistance. We can, and must, do better.

Reversal of the SSI 'cashout' policy is a pivotal opportunity to improve CalFresh enrollment, as nearly 500,000 SSI clients (seniors & people with disabilities) will become CalFresh-eligible for the first time.



Access to CalFresh varies significantly across the state, leading to major inequities. Enrollment processes are often burdensome, especially for seniors, non-English speakers, and the working poor.

California's success in Medi-Cal expansion can be replicated in CalFresh. Many Medi-Cal recipients are eligible for CalFresh but not enrolled, even though the same departments administer both programs. This undermines the health of low-income Californians and shortchanges the potential of the safety net. **An integrated safety net gives people a chance to break the cycle of poverty, hunger, and poor health.**

Legislative Action

SB 285 would ensure that all low-income Californians have efficient and equitable access to CalFresh—by phone, online, and in person—in a dignified way that supports their health and well-being by setting ambitious goals and expectations that make CalFresh a central part of an integrated social safety net.

Why This Matters

California can be a state where every child, every family, every senior, and every community thrives and is free from hunger. To make this reality, we must address persistent disparities facing our state.

**CalFresh Helps
Communities
Thrive**

Over 1.7 million Californians miss out on the nutrition benefits of CalFresh. If all those eligible were enrolled, the state would garner nearly **\$2 Billion more in federal dollars annually, generating over **\$3 Billion in economic activity**.**

Hunger is a solvable problem if we effectively utilize the most powerful tool we have—CalFresh