**SB 882 Sample Support Letter**

**SB 882 (Wiener)** seeks to break the cycle of hunger, poor health, and poverty by ensuring that all low-income Californians, and especially older adults, have efficient and equitable access to CalFresh. SB 882 would simplify the CalFresh application for many older adults and people with disabilities, and eliminate burdensome, ongoing reporting requirements that cause many households to lose nutrition assistance, even though they remain eligible. It would also ensure all applicants and participants can complete the application and recertification interview processes by phone, including the required client signature. By easing the burden of enrolling and retaining CalFresh benefits, we can ensure older adults can live hunger free and age in place with dignity.

**How you can help:** We encourage you to use this sample letter or write their own in support of SB 882. After sending a letter, please share your support via social media, emails, and calls as well!

**Please submit your letter of support now!**

**Letters of support should be sent before March 16, 2020**

**Please email letters to** [**Brayden.Borcherding@sen.ca.gov**](http://Brayden.Borcherding@sen.ca.gov)**;** [**jared@cfpa.net**](mailto:jared@cfpa.net)

**or**

**submit directly through the State’s online Advocate Portal for Legislative Position Letters:**

[**https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/**](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/)

**\*Note: You will need to create an account for yourself/your organization to upload letters through the portal.**

**Organizations: please be sure to submit your letter on letterhead.**

**Individuals: please be sure to include your mailing address in your letter.**

**Questions?** Contact Jared Call at 323.401.4972 or [jared@cfpa.net](mailto:jared@cfpa.net)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**[Date]**

The Honorable Scott Wiener

Senator, 11th Senate District

State Capitol, Room 5100

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 882 (Wiener) – CalFresh Simpler for Seniors**

Dear Senator Wiener,

**[I am/Name of your organization is]** writing in support of SB 882 (Wiener), which would simplify the CalFresh application for many older adults and people with disabilities, and eliminate burdensome, ongoing reporting requirements that cause many households to lose nutrition assistance, even though they remain eligible. It would also ensure all applicants and participants can complete the application and recertification interview processes by phone, including the required client signature

Despite California’s wealth and agricultural riches, more than 4.1 million low-income households are food insecure.[[1]](#footnote-1) CalFresh, our largest nutrition and anti-poverty program, has the greatest poverty reduction impact among social service programs.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, three in ten eligible households don’t gain access to CalFresh. And alarmingly, only 19 percent of eligible older adults (Age 60 or over) are served by the program. The complex and overly burdensome application and reporting processes contribute to low CalFresh enrollment among older adults. By easing the burden of enrolling and retaining CalFresh benefits, we can ensure older Californians can live hunger free and age in place with dignity.

Last year’s expansion of CalFresh eligibility to low-income Californians receiving Social Security Income (SSI)[[3]](#footnote-3) remains a pivotal opportunity to improve CalFresh enrollment, as nearly 500,000 households composed of older adults & people with disabilities have since been enrolled under the state’s Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP). By enacting all available ESAP policies that simplify access and enhance retention in CalFresh, we can maximize the opportunity to provide long-sought food assistance to our state’s most vulnerable.

**[I/We]** support SB 882 because **[choose any of the following reasons or add your own]**

* **California has persistently lagged behind the rest of the nation when it comes to connecting low-income seniors with CalFresh**. Only 19 percent of eligible adults over age 60 participate in CalFresh—the worst SNAP participation rate of any state.[[4]](#footnote-4) In order to maximize the opportunity to enroll and retain SSI recipients in CalFresh, and to reduce stigma and improve access among all low-income seniors, it is critical that we simplify access to CalFresh for those households.
* **CalFresh access and customer service varies significantly across the state**, leading to major inequities. Enrollment processes are often burdensome, especially for older adults, non-English speakers, and the working poor. Regardless of where they live or their individual circumstances, all eligible Californians should have equitable access to vital food assistance needed to live healthy, productive lives. This includes having the option to complete the application and reporting processes completely by phone, as clients in only 20 out of 58 counties currently can.
* **CalFresh helps our 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 annually.[[5]](#footnote-5)

No one should go hungry in the great state of California, and it is our collective responsibility use all the tools we have to make it easier for food-insecure older adults and people with disabilities to connect and stay connected to CalFresh.

**[If you prefer, insert your own reason here.]**

For these reasons, we strongly support SB 882 and thank you for your leadership to improve access to CalFresh.

Sincerely,

**[Your name and title]**

**[Your organization, if applicable]**

cc: Senator Hurtado, Chair, Senate Human Services Committee

Jared Call, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)

Meg Davidson, San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (co-sponsor)

Blanca E. Castro-Paszinski, AARP California (co-sponsor)

Andrew Cheyne, California Association of Food Banks (co-sponsor)

1. https://cfpa.net/county-profiles/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.cbpp.org/blog/snap-lifts-millions-of-kids-out-of-poverty [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/Supplemental-Security-Income [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. National Council on Aging. Senior SNAP Visualization. Available at: <https://www.ncoa.org/economic-security/benefits/visualizations/senior-snap-participation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. CFPA, *Lost Dollars Empty Plates 2019*, available at https://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/LDEP-FullReport-2019.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)