



SB 20 (Dodd) CalFresh: community college eligibility

Summary

SB 20 will secure CalFresh benefits for an estimated 100,000 community college students who can qualify for CalFresh by meeting certain exemptions from the SNAP student rule in federal law, if they are otherwise eligible.

Background

Nearly one in three college students in California faces food and housing insecurity, according to the California Student Aid Commission's 2018-2019 Student Expenses and Resources Survey. The survey, which sampled 150,000 college students from four-year institutions in 2018 and community colleges in 2019, found that students' financial concerns extend far beyond tuition and fees. All California State Universities and University of California institutions were represented in the study, according to the report. The survey also found that black and Hispanic students were more likely than other students to report food insecurity or housing insecurity.

Federal SNAP Law denies eligibility to a student unless they are working 20 hours a week or more or eligible for one of the exemptions to the rule as listed below. A student subject to the work rule must be aged 18-50 and enrolled at least half time, as defined by the school in an institute of "higher education" and enrolled in a "regular curriculum". A student, in certain circumstances, is exempt from these rules. One of those exemption is for students receiving any benefit funded through TANF funds. The receipt of those TANF dollars makes them potentially eligible for CalFresh.

Existing Law

The student work rule was enacted in 1977 (Federal Statutes - 7 USC § 2015 (c) & (e) Federal Regulation - 7 CFR § 273.5). The stated intent of the federal law was to prevent students from relying on food stamps (now SNAP) when their families had the means to support the students' food needs. The federal law allows for several exemptions in order to allow students from low-income families to benefit from the program.

This Bill

SB 20 would address food insecurity among community college students in the following ways:

- Modifies the California Community College student California College Promise Grant (CCPG) to assure that it would benefit CalFresh students to the maximum extent allowable under federal law.
- Require the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to notify students in their system that they may be eligible for CalFresh benefits. This notification shall be considered verification that the student is receiving the benefit specified in the notice for the purposes of the CalFresh program.
- Provide community colleges incentive payments to help students apply and get CalFresh benefits

Support

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organization (CCWRO), Sponsor
University of California Student Association, Sponsor

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