



2022-23 CAFB State Budget Priorities: **State Disaster Food Assistance Program (SDFAP)**

Fund State Disaster Food Assistance Program at \$10 Million to Meet the Scope of Disasters & Maximize Responsiveness

The fundamental feature of the State Disaster Food Assistance Program (SDFAP) is to ensure that there is an adequate resource to respond to California's disasters that often force families to make life-saving decisions overnight with explosive fires and the threat of earthquakes. The federal response – if at all – is often designed to be a lagging support, such as Disaster CalFresh that is not always triggered and requires the restoration of commercial channels. The SDFAP fills these critical gaps in the food safety net.

As we saw with the Caldor Fire, even when there is significant impact on communities as widespread as Pollock Pines to South Lake Tahoe, Presidential Disaster Declarations with Individual Assistance may not come. We know that droughts and freezes have never received federal declarations to unlock emergency food aid no matter how severe.

Thanks to the great work by California Department of Social Services and this Administration, the SDFAP has the program structure to replenish the \$1 million in emergency food aid. But to prevent this resource from running out and being unavailable when communities need it most, we need to adequately fund this program to meet the need when record-breaking disasters strike, as they have in recent years.

Permanently authorize SDFAP in statute

To help ensure the smooth operation, avoid the delays seen this year, and streamline administration of the program we are asking to place SDFAP in the Welfare & Institutions Code where the state's other emergency food programs reside. Just this year the program letter was not released until December, meaning this vital resource was not available during record-breaking fires and deepening drought. We have provided language to place the program into statute and ensure permanent authority and program consistency so communities have access to emergency food when they need it most.

We request to fund the SDFAP at \$10 million in the 2022-23 Budget

We are only a few years removed from the 2014-17 drought in which the Brown Administration funded the Drought Food Assistance Program at more than \$10 million annually, which did not include fire response. We now know that the Department of Water Resources is preparing 0 allocations next year, and the fire season has unfortunately significantly worsened in the past decade. Our pre-COVID-19 survey of food banks showed that \$24 million would be needed for most counties to get through a medium sized disaster. A \$10 million funding level is therefore essential and prudent to enable SDFAP to fill this critical gap in the food safety net, with strong oversight by the Department of Social Services to ensure funds are spent on critical disaster-specific needs.



For more information, please contact: Shanti Elise Prasad, shanti@cafoodbanks.org