

FIGHT HUNGER & SUPPORT CALIFORNIA FARMERS

Appropriate \$60 Million For CalFood in 2023-24 And Set As New Annual Baseline

Food insecurity in California remains at nearly double the pre-pandemic levels, with deep inequities for communities of color. A shocking and unacceptable 28.7% of Black, and 31.2% of Latinx families with children reported food insecurity in 2022, compared to 17.9% for White families (Northwestern Institute for Policy Research, March 2022).

In February, CalFresh recipients – 5 million Californians – will receive their last Emergency Allotment, which has provided a critical boost to benefits throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This will be an overwhelming \$500 million cut to CalFresh statewide per month. Many households will face an unbelievable benefits cliff from \$281 a month to just \$23. This abrupt sunset of Emergency Allotments will cause overwhelming hunger and hardship across our entire state if we do not act now to prevent this harm.

Our Request to Meet Community Need:

- » Appropriate \$60 million General Fund in 2023-24, pursuant to the 2022 Budget agreement (\$52 million one-time was added to augment the original baseline amount of \$8 million General Fund).
- » Set the annual baseline at \$60 million ongoing, up from the current \$8 million.

The CalFood Program

- » Enables food banks to purchase California grown foods to meet their communities' diverse needs, enabling them to fight hunger and support our critical food economy.
- » Is incredibly efficient, as food banks leverage private donations and incredible economies of scale. Each dollar enables California food banks to provide approximately five meals. Food banks use these precious dollars to purchase healthy, expensive items like eggs that are rarely donated, and meet the local cultural needs of their communities.
- » Provides significant return on investment: even a 1% drop in hunger saves California \$600 million in prevented healthcare costs, as well as supporting our hard-hit farmers and food producers in our food economy.

Now is the Time for an Ongoing Commitment to a Hunger-Free Future

We are grateful that CalFood has been funded at \$8 million ongoing since the 2017-18 Budget, and for the historic additional investment of \$112 million in the 2022-23 Budget. While this is an important foundation, \$8 million was never sufficient to meet the need prior to the pandemic when we had 4 million hungry Californians and does not reflect the reality of today or future years.

Our network survived the aftermath of the Great Recession, when public supports were prematurely cut off and it took a decade for hunger to return to pre-crisis levels. This is the critical moment for California to learn that lesson and make the ongoing investment in CalFood needed to fight hunger, support our farmers, and build toward the healthy hunger-free future we know is possible.

