



Assembly Bill (AB) 712: CalFresh Hot and Prepared Foods

SUMMARY

AB 712 will, to the extent of federal law, make all CalFresh recipients eligible to purchase hot and prepared foods at authorized retailers, and would require the Department of Social Services to seek all necessary federal waivers and approvals in order to implement.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

Existing law requires California to administer the provisions of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program to eligible families, known as CalFresh. Under the SNAP program rules set in the 1970s, recipients are prohibited from purchasing hot or prepared foods at the grocery store. Currently, over 5 million, or 1 in 8, Californians receive CalFresh. Many recipients, such as older adults, people with disabilities, or unhoused, who rely on CalFresh to eat face the most significant barriers. These barriers include the lack of kitchen facilities or means of preparing and cooking meals with groceries, special dietary needs, and specific foods required for medications, among other factors that strain the ability of traditional groceries to meet their needs. Additionally, all CalFresh recipients deserve the same shopping

experience as everyone else; the dignity to choose what food is best for their family without restrictions.

SOLUTION

AB 712 would allow CalFresh recipients to purchase ready-to-eat hot and prepared foods at grocery stores maximizing food access for all CalFresh recipients. This directly aligns with the Conference on Hunger goal to increase food access and modernize federal programs. The federal government allows for a hot and prepared food waiver during declared emergencies, which they recently provided to California due to floods and extreme storms, receiving positive feedback from participants. AB 712 would create a pathway for California to seek a permanent waiver and provide permanent better food choices for children and families.

SUPPORT

California Association of Food Banks (co-sponsor)
GRACE/End Child Poverty CA (co-sponsor)

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