

Assembly
California Legislature



AB 2033 (Reyes): EBT Access for Student Empowerment (EASE) Act

SUMMARY

AB 2033 would make it possible for students to use their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards in at least one location in college campuses across California's three systems of public higher education. The bill would also ensure that students have easily accessible information on EBT vendors on and off campus so that they know where they can use their food benefits.

BACKGROUND

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service data shows that in 2022, approximately 4.6 million California residents, or 12% (1/8) of the state population was assisted by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This is known as CalFresh in California, which provides food benefits to low-income households.

A California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) report notes that between 400,000 and 750,000 of California's postsecondary students are eligible for CalFresh; however, only 127,000 students receive these benefits. The report also notes that one third of all postsecondary students in California experience food insecurity. There is a vital need to make these services more known and accessible to students. Limited awareness and complex processes pose barriers to getting students the services they need.

A 2019 Legislative Analyst's Office report found 44% of undergraduates and 26% of graduate students in California experience food insecurity. Data from the University of California demonstrates that students who

experience food and housing challenges have lower grade point averages and graduation rates compared to students who have their basic needs met.

THIS BILL

CalFresh benefits are critical in helping address student hunger, and it is important that we make it possible for students to use these benefits on campus. AB 2033 would make it possible for students to use their food benefits in at least one location in college campuses across California's three systems of public higher education. Each campus would be required, or requested, to have at least one store that sells food to apply to become an authorized retail food store under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and if approved, shall accept the use of EBT.

AB 2033 would also require the California State University and University of California systems to establish Basic Needs Centers and a Basic Needs Coordinator position, which mirrors existing statute for the California Community College System. If a campus already has a Basic Needs Center in place, that may satisfy this requirement.

Every Basic Needs Center would be required to provide a document that clearly provides lists of on- and off- campus basic needs services. This document would now include the link to the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service's "SNAP Retail Locator" which is an interactive map that identifies EBT vendor locations nationally.

SUPPORT

Student Senate for California Community
Colleges (co-sponsor)
Faculty Association of California Community
Colleges (co-sponsor)
uAspire (co-sponsor)
Coalition of California Welfare Rights
Organizations

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