[DATE]

The Honorable Buffy Wicks

Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee

1020 O Street, Suite 8220

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1968 (Jackson) - SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of *[Name of your organization],* I write in strong support of AB 1968, which seeks to require the Department of Social Services (DSS) to identify qualifying seniors (age 60 years and older) and automatically enroll those individuals into the Cal Fresh program.

SNAP is an invaluable tool in the fight against food insecurity and poverty. Per the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped 4,627,700 Californians in fiscal year 2022. It lifted 776,000 people (including 377,000 children) above the poverty line annually in California between 2014 and 2018. Of that number, 991,816 were seniors (a person age 60 or over) in 2022, and over 21% of participants in SNAP.

California’s over-65 population is expected to be 87 percent higher in 2030 than in 2012, an increase of more than four million people. This group is expected to grow much faster than the rest of the population, rising from 12 percent in 2012 to 19 percent in 2030.

A 2021 study by the Annals of Internal Medicine (ACP) found that higher enrollment by seniors in SNAP is associated with fewer hospital and long-term care admissions and emergency room visits – and an estimated Medicaid cost-savings of $2,360 per person annually.

In 2018, California ranked among the lowest in the nation for SNAP participation and ranked the lowest for senior participation. According to data from the USDA, California seniors had a participation rate of 32% in 2018, well below the national average of 42%.

California has plenty of room for growth in SNAP participation for seniors. For example, in 2018, Oregon observed 67% of eligible seniors participating in SNAP. Washington State saw similar success, with 64% of eligible seniors participating in SNAP in 2018. Finally, even Florida outperformed California in SNAP participation rates for eligible seniors, at 67% in 2018.

California can no longer afford to leave options on the table when combating food insecurity, especially for its seniors. It must get creative to ensure a good quality of life for its growing senior population. For these reasons, we support AB 1968. Please contact me at [*insert contact information*] if you have any questions about our position.

Sincerely,

[*Your Name*]

cc: Chair and members, Assembly Committee on Appropriations.