

May 20, 2024

President Pro Tem Mike McGuire
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

Speaker Robert Rivas
California Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal
Review, California State Senate
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senate and Assembly leaders,

On behalf of **78** anti-hunger and anti-poverty organizations, **we urge the California legislature to support on-time implementation of the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot in the 2024-2025 State Budget and reject the proposed permanent cut in the Governor's May Revise budget.**

Today, [over 5 million Californians rely on CalFresh](#) to put food on the table and feed their families. While this is our state's most important anti-hunger program, benefit levels are too low, and only average about \$6 per person per day. For the roughly 8% of households who are receiving the minimum benefit, they are only receiving \$23 per month, barely enough to cover a loaf of bread, a gallon of milk, and a dozen eggs.

The [Thrifty Food Plan \(TFP\)](#) is set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and determines the minimum allotment of SNAP (CalFresh) benefits. In 2021, the [TFP was adjusted beyond inflation](#) for the first time in more than 45 years, but it fails to consider the exorbitant cost of living in states like California, resulting in woefully inadequate benefit allotments. **If receiving the minimum of \$23 a month, a household of one in California would run out of benefits in less than four days.**

We are extremely grateful for the investment in the [2023-24 State Budget](#) to fund the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot, to provide additional CalFresh food benefits for households that are only receiving the federal minimum allotment of \$23 per month, bringing them up to \$50 per month.

With the ending of COVID-era anti-hunger supports like [SNAP/CalFresh Emergency Allotments](#) and Pandemic EBT, combined with record spikes in food prices, this pilot is needed more than ever. **23% of all California households, including 49% of Black households with children, report food insecurity.** Food Banks are on the frontlines of this hunger crisis every day, facing still-record demand: [78% have had to scale back services in some way.](#)

As hunger remains high, we need to protect and strengthen investments in CalFresh, our nation's largest and most important anti-hunger program, serving over 5 million Californians. Especially since:

- [CalFresh provides nine meals to every one provided by food banks](#) — a gap that private charity could never fill.
- CalFresh [supports our food and farm economy](#). Each \$1 in benefits generates as much as \$1.80 in GDP during an economic downturn.
- CalFresh [lifted over 1.1 million Californians above the poverty line in 2023](#) and [reduces food insecurity for households on the program](#), including children.

Thanks to swift and careful implementation underway by the California Department of Social Services, the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot will soon ensure older adults and people with disabilities have greater access to food. This is crucial since these populations are already struggling to meet their basic

needs, as [older adults are the fastest-growing homeless population](#) and [people with disabilities spend almost twice as much as people without disabilities on out-of-pocket medical costs](#).

California can — and should — join several other states, including New Jersey, New Mexico, Maryland, and DC, that have already taken action to increase benefit adequacy to help mitigate poverty and food insecurity.

We thank the California Legislature's leadership for supporting and leading anti-hunger initiatives to strengthen CalFresh. The state budget is a reflection of our values, and we urge leadership to value a future where people do not go hungry by protecting on-time implementation of the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot.

Sincerely,

Alchemist Community Development Corporation
Apostles's For Christ Deliverance Miniistries
Bebe Bitez
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
Berkeley Food Network
California Association of Food Banks
California Farm Direct Markets Inc
California Food and Farming Network
California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA)
California Nurses for Environmental Health & Justice
California WIC Association
CCWRO
Center for Healthy Communities
Center of Immigrant Protection
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative
Ceres Community Project
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
Communities Actively Living Independent & Free
Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County
Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County
Community Health Action Network
Community Services Unlimited
Courage California
Dreams for Change
Eastmont Community Center
Educate. Advocate.
Farm Habit
Feeding San Diego
FM & LCE
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food for People
Food Share
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
Fresh Approach
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Gender Justice LA
GLIDE Foundation
GRACE/End Child Poverty CA
Hunger Action Los Angeles

Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank
Justice in Aging
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Latino Council
Los Angeles Community Action Network: LACAN
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Maternal and Child Health Access
Mendocino Food & Nutrition Program Inc
Mirror Memoirs
Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
NCJWLA
Northern California College Promise Coalition
Nourish California
Oasis Legal Services
Parent advocate assistant
Prison From The Inside Out, Inc
Proyecto Trans Latinos
Redwood Empire Food Bank
Rising Communities
River City Food Bank
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Senior and Disability Action
Sierra Harvest
Tenderloin Chinese Rights Association
The Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin
The Gubbio Project
TRANSFRONTERAS.ORG
Tranz of Anarchii Inc
UFCW Western States Council
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College
Veggielution
Vision y Compromiso
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Yolo Food Bank