



FACT SHEET

AB 777

Disaster CalFRESH Transparency and Reporting Act

Status: Assembly Committee on Utilities and Energy

BILL SUMMARY

AB 777 would help our most vulnerable families across the state, gain critical access to federal food assistance following disasters by ensuring accurate data is reported to the Department of Social Services (DSS). This will allow the DSS to access all available federal food assistance through CalFresh, Disaster CalFresh, and other safety net programs.

CURRENT LAW

Existing federal law provides for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, under which supplemental nutrition assistance benefits allocated to the state by the federal government are distributed to eligible individuals by each county. Existing federal law, through Disaster SNAP, provides for short-term food assistance benefits to families suffering in the wake of a major disaster.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, AB 607 (Gloria) was chaptered into law and requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to maximize available federal food assistance. Furthermore, federal law and regulation provide critical opportunities to draw down federal food assistance, which require detailed, timely, and complete data from utility companies in order to maximize relief to all impacted households. Since the passage of AB 607, the DSS has developed procedures on how to respond, following power outages and

disaster declarations. Unfortunately, many underserved communities are disproportionately impacted due to climate change and the increasing scope, severity, and frequency of natural disasters. Most recently, the Los Angeles fires and windstorms resulted in several communities, simultaneously without power, and dealing with spoiled food and limited access to resources. While the DSS requested federal assistance, many zip codes of families affected by these fires, were not eligible to receive assistance.

The lack of timely or complete data from utility companies can result in requests for federal assistance that does not include eligible households or households not approved, as was the case in Santa Clara, June of 2023 when the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) agency denied DSS' request for Disaster CalFresh.

To ensure our disadvantaged communities aren't left behind, accurate data must be shared to ensure all eligible households are approved and allow the DSS to request for further critical federal assistance.

SOLUTION

This bill will require that all necessary data sharing agreements and points of contact, or other necessary steps, are in place between utility companies and the DSS to allow California to maximize federal food assistance programs and provide support to families in need following disasters.

SUPPORT

GRACE/End Child Poverty California (Co-Sponsor)

CA Association of Food Banks (Co-Sponsor)

Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

Courage California

Food for People, Humboldt County

GLIDE

Feeding the Foothills

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County

Senior and Disability Action

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