



SB 761 – CalFresh for Students Act

Optimizing CalFresh Eligibility for Students in Need of Food Assistance.

SUMMARY

SB 761 directs the California Student Aid Commission to add an “opt-in” option for students to receive notification about their potential CalFresh eligibility when submitting their Cal Grant application. This bill also expands the programs of study that increase a student’s eligibility for CalFresh by including students enrolled at least half-time in any program of study at a 2 or 4-year public institution of higher education under certain eligibility rules.

BACKGROUND

California’s CalFresh program is the largest food assistance program in the nation, providing financial assistance to low income students, families, and individuals. CalFresh plays a large role in supporting local economies and reducing poverty.¹

Many college students are low-income, and struggle to meet basic needs, but especially accessing nutritious and affordable meals.² Currently, 50% of college students in California experience food insecurity.³

Several barriers make it difficult for students to access CalFresh benefits. In 2021, only a quarter of eligible California Community College students were actually receiving CalFresh benefits.⁴ This rate was even lower for University of California students.⁵

Students can qualify for CalFresh through a variety of ways, one of which is through a student eligibility rule. One of the pathways under this rule is the Local Programs that Increases Employability (LPIE) initiative, which is a federal initiative that identifies programs in colleges designed to increase employability skills for students. To qualify for CalFresh through this program, a student must be enrolled in an LPIE at least half-time.

THE PROBLEM

Many students are unaware that they are eligible for CalFresh. Among students who were identified as food insecure and aware of CalFresh, over 50% did not apply because they thought they were ineligible as students, while another quarter did not apply because they did not know how.⁶ This gap in knowledge further exacerbates food insecurity among college students. Providing students with a “warm-hand-off” to individuals who can help determine eligibility improves access to essential food assistance.

Furthermore, California colleges lack a standardized process to submit their programs for LPIE status. There is no uniform approach in colleges applying for their programs to be included in LPIE. This limits access for students, who may not be able to utilize the LPIE rule, despite being in degree programs that meet the standard.

THE SOLUTION

SB 761 requires the California Student Aid Commission to add an “opt-in” option for students to receive notification about their potential CalFresh eligibility through the state’s delivery grant system. By opting in, a student’s contact information will be shared with their campus’ county human services agency liaison who will assist with CalFresh eligibility and application process.

Additionally, this bill also expands the LPIE definition to include students enrolled at least half-time in any program of study at a 2 or 4-year public institution of higher education increasing accessibility for all students at all public institutions.

SUPPORT

- Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee (Cal-SPAC) (Co-Sponsor)
- Southern California College Attainment Network (Co-Sponsor)

¹ [Public Policy Institute of California \(PPIC\)](#)

² [Inside Higher Ed](#)

³ [UCLA Center for Health Policy](#)

⁴ [CA Student Aid Commission](#)

⁵ [Ibid](#)

⁶ [UCLA Center for Health Policy](#)

- Alliance for a Better Community (Co-Sponsor)
- California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy (Co-Sponsor)
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
- Associated Students, California State University Northridge
- Association of Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors
- C5 Los Angeles
- California Association of Food Banks
- California Community Foundation
- California Opportunity Youth Network
- California State Student Association
- California Student Aid Commission
- Citrus College
- Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
- College Access Plan
- Fulfillment Fund
- Go Public Schools
- GRACE – End Child Poverty CA
- Junior League of San Jose
- Junior League of Palo Alto Mid Peninsula
- Kid City Hope Place
- Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
- Los Angeles Urban Foundation
- Motivating Our Students Through Experience
- North Orange County Community College District
- San Bernardino Community College District
- San Diego Hunger Coalition
- San Francisco Rising
- Second Harvest Food
- Student Senate of California Community Colleges
- Swipe Out Hunger
- University of California
- Western Center on Law and Poverty

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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