



# CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF FOOD BANKS

## 2026 STATE POLICY AGENDA

We thank the Administration and Legislature for the critical investments made to fight hunger in California. Over one in five California households are faced with the stress and health consequences of food insecurity, with shocking disparities for communities of color. Food banks continue to face record demand. Our 42-member network and their more than 6,000 community distribution partners continue to serve roughly 6 million Californians a month - a notable increase from the 4.5 million people they served during the height of the pandemic in 2021. This year, demand has risen even further, and with fewer resources and more federal uncertainty. Hungry families cannot wait, and we must build toward a more equitable, hunger-free future now.

### FUND CALFOOD ONGOING AT \$60 MILLION AND AT \$50 MILLION ONE-TIME

Appropriate ongoing minimum funding of \$60M General Fund for CalFood (\$52M in addition to \$8M in baseline annual budget) starting in 2026-27, when current one-time funding runs out. Plus, \$50M additional one-time to address the increased need expected as a result of the federal cuts to CalFresh due to H.R. 1.

#### » WHAT IS CALFOOD?

The CalFood Program allocates state funding to food banks for purchasing, storing, and distributing food grown and/or produced in California.

**CALFOOD IS A LIFELINE FOR CALIFORNIA'S:**



FARMERS



FOOD BANKS



FAMILIES

#### » KEY ADVANTAGES OF THE CALFOOD PROGRAM

- Food banks can meet diverse dietary/cultural needs and purchase rarely-donated items like eggs and meat.
- Food banks leverage economies of scale — each dollar enables food banks to provide about 1.5 meals.
- Even a 1% drop in hunger saves California \$600 million in prevented healthcare costs, and supports farmers and food producers critical to our food economy.\*

#### » LESS FUNDS, LESS ESSENTIALS

With a 90% drop in CalFood funding, food banks will not be able to continue purchasing/distributing essential items at current levels:



EGGS



PRODUCE



MEAT



NUTS

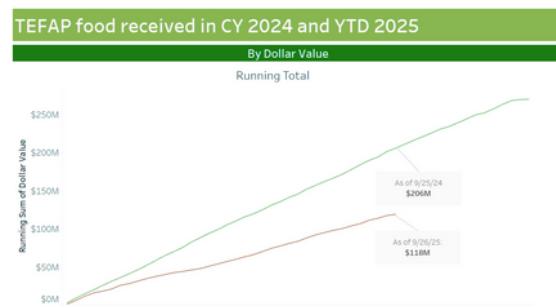


DAIRY

**1%** **DROP IN HUNGER**

→ **\$600 MILLION** **SAVED IN HEALTHCARE COSTS**

#### » FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR FOOD BANKS IS DROPPING



California has seen a significant reduction in federal commodities in 2025. The Emergency Food Program is trending at 38% less food in 2025 than in 2024.

#### » STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Food banks need CalFood funds now more than ever. In November 2025 we surveyed our food bank network:

- 92% reported serving more people in the current quarter compared to the prior 3 months
- 55% distributed more food this year compared to last year
- 21% distributed the same amount of food to more people
- 100% said they could spend more CalFood funds if allocated more.

**“CalFood is a vital partner to our food bank, helping us reach a growing number of children, seniors, veterans, and families in need. Demand has never been higher, and continued investment is critical to ensuring no one in our community goes hungry. ”**

– Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County



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## BOLSTER THE EMERGENCY FOOD NETWORK

### » EXTEND TAX CREDITS & ASSISTANCE FUNDS VITAL TO CA FOOD BANKS

- › Extend the Emergency Food for Families Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund, set to expire in 2026, which allows Californians to make a voluntary tax contribution to support food banks.
- › Extend the Farmer to Family Tax Credit, set to expire in 2027, which allows California food producers to claim a 15% state tax credit on the qualified wholesale value of donated food items, enabling producers to donate food products to California food banks and get nourishing food into the hands of individuals and families.

## MITIGATE HARM TO CALFRESH CAUSED BY H.R. 1

### » MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF CALFRESH:

- › Appropriate \$15M one-time in 2026-2027 to sustain application assistance through the CalFresh Outreach Program which is critical in connecting the most vulnerable Californians to food benefits.
- › Protect un- and under-employed Californians by establishing state-funded benefits and employment-and-training resources for CalFresh recipients who are subject to the punitive federal ABAWD time-limit rules.
- › Protect the California Food Assistance Program expansion for Californians ages 55+ regardless of immigration status, fully invest in including humanitarian immigrants newly excluded from food assistance due to H.R. 1., and expand Food4All to all ages by Oct 2027.

## SHORTEN THE LINE AT FOOD BANKS

### » NOURISHING CHILDREN:

- › Fight child hunger and protect student data privacy by creating a statewide online application for SUN Bucks.
- › Protect our nation-leading School Meals for All by maintaining the state per-meal reimbursement rate.

### » ENDING HUNGER & SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL NEEDS:

- › Appropriate \$16.5M to sustain the distribution of diapers and wipes through CA's successful Diaper Bank Program.
- › Support SSI/SSP recipients by providing an ongoing COLA for SSP grants, establishing grants above the Federal Poverty Level, and reviving an Emergency Grant Program.

**66** *California food banks are already stretched thin, serving more than 6 million people each month. As the implementation of HR 1 begins to move through our communities, California food banks will see a surge in need. California must take action to protect people from going hungry.*

– Stacia Levenfeld, CEO, California Association of Food Banks

Learn More: [cafoodbanks.org/hunger-legislation/tracker](http://cafoodbanks.org/hunger-legislation/tracker)

For questions: [policy@cafoodbanks.org](mailto:policy@cafoodbanks.org)

\*Citations: [cafoodbanks.org/citations](http://cafoodbanks.org/citations)

\*\*Percentages based on number of survey respondents