

AB 1734

The Count Hunger Act



ASSEMBLYMEMBER _____ DISTRICT 19

Catherine Stefani

SUMMARY

AB1734 (The Count Hunger Act) responds to the federal government's elimination of national hunger data by creating a two-year pilot program that funds California's food insecurity research and expands coverage to middle-income families earning up to 400% of the poverty level. Ensuring California can track how federal policy changes — including HR1's proposed cuts to SNAP and nutrition education — affect hunger across income levels, providing critical data while the state advocates for restored federal research capacity.

BACKGROUND

In October 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the discontinuation of funding for the nation's most comprehensive and consistent source of data on food insecurity - the [USDA Hunger Survey](#) (Annual Household Food Security Survey or CPS – FSS). For three decades, this study provided the empirical foundation for major analyses such as [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap](#) and guided numerous state and food insecurity research nationwide.

[The California Health Interview Survey \(CHIS\)](#) fills a critical gap. UCLA administers this survey to 25,000 households annually, collecting data on income, demographics, health, and food insecurity that directly shapes safety net policies and resource allocation. However, in January 2026, the California Department of Public Health informed UCLA that funding to conduct the food insecurity screener by CHIS was cut, resulting from the loss of federal funding.

CHIS previously administered the food security screener only to California households below 200% FPL, approximately \$64,000 for a family of

four. This cutoff excludes a substantial share of Californians living above 200% FPL yet below their county's cost-of-living threshold, which has been identified as [the majority of working households](#). According to [the Brookings Institution](#), 1/3 of all households that are food insecure are above the 200% FPL. Expanding screening to households up to 400% FPL would enable CHIS to assess food insecurity among middle-income economically vulnerable families.

With the loss of both CHIS and USDA Hunger Survey, California will lack the data needed to understand the effects of large-scale federal policy changes on vulnerable populations throughout the state. California lacks the data needed to evaluate the real-world effects of large-scale federal policy changes, such as those in HR1, even as the state advocated for the restoration of national food insecurity research.

THIS BILL

The Count Hunger Act creates a pilot program to fund the food insecurity portion of CHIS and expand screening to include all households up to 400% of FPL for two survey years (2027–2028). It also requires the publishing of statewide and localized data on the existing publicly accessible AskCHIS reporting tool. This approach ensures that critical data will remain available in California to inform policymaking and action to combat hunger.

SUPPORT

- San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (Co-Sponsor)

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- California Association of Food Banks (Co-Sponsor)
- End Child Poverty California powered by GRACE
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
- Edgewood Center for Children and Families
- Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, The Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

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