



Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, 56th District

AB 2299 – CARET: CA Antihunger Response and Employment Training Act

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 2299 would establish a state-funded food benefits program, known as the California Antihunger Response and Employment Training Act (CARET), to support Californians who lose CalFresh eligibility due to federal food benefit time-limit rules.

BACKGROUND

In July 2025, President Trump signed House Resolution 1 (HR 1). This bill included severe cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California. HR 1 reduced food assistance for millions of families by limiting eligibility, reducing benefits and services, and shifting costs from the federal government to the state.¹

There are various populations of Californians that are eligible for CalFresh, each with unique criteria needing to be met. One specific criteria applies to those referred to federally as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, or “ABAWD”, or what we refer to as time-limited individuals. With the passage of HR 1, multiple changes were made to the rule, including expanding limits to more Californians.

PROBLEM

Currently, no one is subject to CalFresh time limits in California, and the state has had a waiver from the time limit benefits. However, California’s exemption expired on January 31, 2026, and HR 1’s new rules go into effect on June 1, 2026. Under these rules, a person subject to the time limits can only receive CalFresh benefits for three months within a 3-year time period unless they can demonstrate they are working a minimum of 20 hours a week every month, or they have an exemption.

As a result of the lapsed waiver and passage of HR 1, the population subjected to time limits expanded to include people who were previously exempt, including: veterans, former foster youth, older adults (55–64), people with dependent children older than 13, and people experiencing homelessness.¹

The California Department of Social Services estimates 665,000 Californians will be at risk of losing indispensable food assistance because they cannot meet the new requirements, including those previously exempt under the ABAWD rule.

Time limits disproportionately harm communities already facing discrimination and employment barriers. Black and Hispanic communities are more than twice as likely to participate in SNAP than their white peers, leaving them particularly vulnerable to unhelpful work requirements that make it harder to receive or keep this important source of support.²

Work-related time limits are cruel and unnecessary. They cause people to lose access to food they desperately need. Many people subject to work requirements face barriers such as unstable housing, health limitations, criminal records, lack of transportation, and caregiving responsibilities—making rigid hourly requirements unrealistic, even for those actively seeking work.³ Time limits ignore these realities and punish people for circumstances beyond their control, rather than supporting pathways to stable employment.

SOLUTION

AB 2299 remedies these problems by ensuring our most vulnerable communities can provide food for their family by establishing CARET benefits. These benefits:

- Protect the same number of individuals who receive CalFresh prior to the rule change;
- Serve people who have lost their CalFresh benefits until they are able to meet the work requirements, receive a waiver, or regain CalFresh benefits;
- Encourage employment and training opportunities to stimulate the economy.

Through the creation of CARET benefits, California can protect our communities from ongoing attacks on vital social services by eliminating hunger and providing for people during their most vulnerable moments.

CONTACT

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¹ [The Legislative Analyst’s Office Overview of Major Impacts of H.R. 1—One Big Beautiful Bill Act on CalFresh](#)

² [Economic Policy Institute](#)

³ [The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

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