



FIGHT HUNGER & SUPPORT CALIFORNIA FARMERS WITH CALFOOD

ASK: \$60M as ongoing baseline funding starting in 2026-27 & \$50M in one-time funding in 2026-27 for H.R.1 Response

Food insecurity is a major problem in California – **22% of households** overall and **27% of households with children** experience hunger according to the latest Census Household Pulse Survey.

Food banks are an essential resource that people turn to in times of crisis, and we are serving increasingly high levels of demand. Our 42-member food banks are serving 6 million Californians per month, a noticeable increase from the 4.5 million we served during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Our members anticipate an even greater demand in the coming years due to the rising cost of living and recent federal actions. Increased CalFood funding is essential to helping our food banks continue to serve their communities as they face this increased need.

It's daunting to not know where your next meal is going to come from. As a mom, you don't want to tell your kids, well, we don't have enough money....To have places like this that have food that is more useful, like milk, we got milk last time, fresh fruit, fresh veggies, healthy food, that's the best."

– Family in Ventura County



Our Request to Help Food Banks Meet Increasing Need

CalFood has been funded with an annual \$8M baseline, with additional multi-year funding and one-time funding the last few years. While \$8M baseline for CalFood is an important foundation, it was never sufficient to meet the need prior to the pandemic when we had 4 million hungry Californians, and does not reflect the reality of today or the future. Without additional funding in this year's budget, CalFood will revert to our \$8M baseline funding – a 90% cut from the \$80M we got last year. **We are asking for a new baseline to be set of \$60M ongoing and an additional \$50M in one-time funding this year to help food banks address the increased need from H.R.1.**



Legend: Baseline Funding (Green), One-Time Funding (Annual Average since 2022) (Red)



The CalFood Program

- » Enables food banks to purchase California grown foods to meet their communities' diverse needs, enabling them to fight hunger and support our critical food economy.
- » Is incredibly efficient, as food banks leverage private donations and incredible economies of scale. Each dollar enables California food banks to provide approximately five meals. Food banks use these precious dollars to purchase healthy, expensive items like eggs that are rarely donated, and meet the local cultural needs of their communities.
- » Provides significant return on investment: even a 1% reduction in hunger saves California \$600 million in prevented healthcare costs, as well as supporting our hard-hit farmers and food producers in our food economy.

"The CalFood program is the single most important tool that we have to address the growing lines over the last 2 years. Having the ability to purchase food allowed us to bring on more partners resulting in an increase of access points across the county by almost 33%" – Community Action Partnership of Kern County



California Faces An Unprecedented Crisis

California’s hunger crisis will get worse in the coming year without state action. As many Californians are already struggling to afford basic needs, cost-of-living challenges and economic uncertainty threaten to push even more people into food insecurity. The Urban Institute finds that 1 out of every 5 adults in the United States is taking on debt to pay for food, and a December 2025 Politico poll found that Americans rank grocery prices as their number one affordability concern.

This struggle to afford basic needs is being magnified by recent federal actions. Most notably, H.R.1, or the “One Big Beautiful Bill,” which has resulted in the largest cuts to SNAP/CalFresh since the program was created. ~800,000 CalFresh recipients are now expected to see a loss in vital food benefits this year. This increased need comes as food banks are receiving 38 percent less food from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) than the previous year. The TEFAP program accounts for about 20% of the food our food banks distribute. This leaves food banks with an untenable situation: the need to serve a dramatic increase in people while receiving significantly less funding to do so.

Federal Food Assistance Is Declining



In the aftermath of the Great Recession, public supports were prematurely cut off and it took a decade for hunger to return to pre-crisis levels. This coming crisis is the critical opportunity for California to chart a different path that ensures our state’s most vulnerable aren’t left behind. We need ongoing investment in CalFood to meet this moment so we can preserve our progress by continuing to fight hunger, supporting our farmers, and building toward the healthy hunger-free future we know is possible.

“CalFood for our operations has meant having the capacity to expand our distribution of culturally relevant and preferred food for neighbors. Often these are ideal staples like tortillas and eggs that neighbors have to skip purchasing when it comes to their food budget - items that can also have the highest nutritional impact as well. Through our partnership with the Community Alliance of Family Farms (CAFF), we use CalFood to source culturally appropriate, locally grown produce from small and medium-sized farms, strengthening the connection between farmers and their neighborhoods.” – Central California Food Bank

“CalFood provides funding for food resources we would otherwise go without. As the donated supply food chain decreases, we use CalFood funding to make up the difference. It has allowed us to increase the volume of food we can give to each of our neighbors, cutting the gap they face due to prioritizing their financial resources to other costs of living and what SNAP benefits don't make up for.” – Foodbank of Santa Barbara County



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