

Preventing a 2026 Hunger Crisis in California

Expanding the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

Action is needed now to prevent a humanitarian crisis and save lives by investing \$1.73B in food assistance for Californians in need.

The 2026 Humanitarian Catastrophe

The federal government recently enacted the largest cuts to SNAP in program history, including:

- Abandoning humanitarian immigrants by cutting them off of CalFresh, further restricting access to food benefits based on immigration status.
- Expanding cruel time limit rules to limit access to food benefits for previously exempt populations, including veterans, youth under 25 who age out of foster care, people experiencing homelessness, caregivers of kids ages 14-18, and older adults ages 54-64.

Nearly one million Californians will lose access to food assistance if the state does not act now. **We urge California's elected leaders to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe by investing \$1.733 billion in state food assistance for people in need.**

As a result:

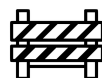
72,000 Californians are projected to be cut off of CalFresh due to their immigration status, starting April 2026. This includes refugees, asylees, and survivors of trafficking.

665,000 Californians are projected to lose food assistance simply because they cannot meet rigid work rules, including people who were previously exempt.

HR 1 deepens existing inequities



74% of people subject to time limits already work, but face unstable hours in the low-wage labor market. Many older adults and Black individuals face discrimination to finding employment.



Humanitarian immigrants are finding their footing in California after escaping violence and persecution in their home country. **Immigrants already face more barriers to accessing food due to language barriers and chilling effect** -- taking away benefits during such a vulnerable transition will only make hunger worse



Hunger is a barrier to employment, not a motivator. Losing benefits leads to more serious physical and mental health conditions and a **14% increase in 'unhealthy days'** while causing no significant change in employment status.

Prevent Harm Through CFAP:

By allocating ~1.75B in the 2026-27 budget to keep Californians from going hungry, California can protect our economy and residents from cruel, counterproductive federal CalFresh rules.

CFAP currently serves 63,000 lawfully present immigrants. Expanding CFAP will:

- Provide food assistance in the same amount people would have received through CalFresh.
- Serve people cut off after the federal 3-month time limit, until they meet work requirements, regain CalFresh eligibility, or are no longer income eligible.
- Serve people denied CalFresh due to federal eligibility rules based on immigration status.
- Deliver benefits through California's state-administered, state-funded EBT system.



Ensuring individuals are fed is a positive return on investment by:

- **Generating economic stability.** Each \$1 in CalFresh benefits generated between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity during times of economic downturn.
- **Lifting individuals out of poverty and improves individuals' physical and mental well-being.**
- **Saving money in healthcare costs associated with hunger.**
- **Preventing avoidable deaths caused by lack of food access.**

A CFAP expansion is already underway to provide food benefits to Californians ages 55 and older, regardless of immigration status. To build on our progress and support all Californians in need, we must:

- **Extend CFAP food benefits to the 72,000 humanitarian immigrants** losing eligibility starting April 2026 because of H.R. 1. (\$156.4 million GF in FY 2026 - 27)
- **Extend CFAP food benefits to the 665,500 people losing access to CalFresh** starting June 2026 due to time limits. (Estimated \$1.6 billion GF in FY 2026 - 27)
- **Make any automation updates necessary to enable CFAP to assist time-limited households and humanitarian immigrants.** (Unknown cost (estimates pending) in FY 2026 - 2027)
- **Sustain the allocation of \$38 million GF from FY 2025 - 26** to continue automation progress and fulfill on time the planned expansion of the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to undocumented adults ages 55 and older, October 1, 2027.

Questions? Contact bchao@caimmigrant.org and kobrien@wclp.org