



Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, 56th District

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

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 2299, the California Antihunger Response and Employment Training (CARET) Act, would provide state-funded food assistance to support Californians who lose CalFresh eligibility due to federal rule changes.

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, expanding who is subject to time limits, reducing benefits and services, and shifting costs from the federal government to the state.¹

PROBLEM

As a result of California's rule waiver expiring, and the passage of HR 1, Californians will be subjected to time limits on CalFresh benefits starting on June 1, 2026. Under these rules, a person subject to time limits can only receive CalFresh benefits for three months within a 3-year 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 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 562,000 Californians will lose 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.

Additionally, H.R. 1 removed CalFresh eligibility for 34,000 refugees, asylees, survivors of trafficking, and other humanitarian immigrants, starting April 2026. 36% of those losing food due to this rule change are children, and 10% are seniors. People with humanitarian protection have rebuilt their lives in California after surviving extreme violence and upheaval. Eliminating their access to CalFresh during resettlement undermines household stability and severs a critical support at a vulnerable moment. The May Revision's decline in estimated impact from 72,000 to 34,000¹ affected individuals does not reflect reduced harm; it reflects a chilling effect, as eligible families disenroll out of fear driven by federal actions. California must expand its state-operated program to provide these benefits more securely and consistently.

SOLUTION

AB 2299 would establish CARET benefits to ensure our most vulnerable communities can provide food for their families. These benefits would:

- Protect everyone who would have received CalFresh prior to federal rule changes;
- 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; and
- Be provided through the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

Providing CARET benefits would be highly cost-effective and provide strong return on investment by

¹ [CDSS 2026-2027 May Revision Local Assistance Estimate Methodologies](#)

² [The Legislative Analyst's Office Overview of Major Impacts of H.R. 1—One Big Beautiful Bill Act on CalFresh](#)

³ [Economic Policy Institute](#)

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

keeping grocery retailers open and fully staffed, and preventing hunger costs from shifting to healthcare, elder care, and child welfare systems.

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.

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