

AB 942: Access to Safe Food Choices & Food Security Act of 2019

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SUMMARY

AB 942 addresses food insecurity and reduces barriers for California's most vulnerable populations by expanding access to and availability of hot and prepared food choices for people who are homeless, disabled and elderly through a statewide expansion of the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (RMP).

BACKGROUND

CalFresh, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), provides food benefits to low-income people. There are 4.5 million Californians who are food insecure and in danger of experiencing hunger every day. Food insecurity is particularly a struggle and on the rise among communities who: (1) are unable to cook and prepare their own meals, (2) lack the facilities to store food safely, and (3) live in communities that have limited access to grocery stores.

In recognition of these challenges, CalFresh has the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which allows participants who are homeless, disabled, or elderly to use their Golden State Advantage Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to purchase low cost, prepared meals at authorized restaurants in their county. However, the RMP currently only exists on California State University campuses and in 10 California counties: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz. As a result, otherwise eligible CalFresh participants are unable to use the RMP simply because they live in a county that has not opted to administer the Program. Additionally, restaurants that wish to serve RMP participants are unable to do so if they are located in a county that has yet to opt into administering the program.

California has the worst participation rate in the country among seniors and people with disabilities, and the program nationally continues to under-enroll people who are homeless. Currently, only 7 out of 10 eligible Californians use their CalFresh benefits. The county-by-county opt-in model has failed to adequately address the realities and growing needs of people's situations throughout the state of California. The county opt-in model has contributed to the low participation rate by eligible Californians. CalFresh recipients in the remaining 48 California counties deserve the chance to access nutritious food and fully utilize their existing benefits and federal resources in the fight against chronic hunger and food insecurity.

SPECIFICALLY, THIS BILL

This bill requires the California Department of Social Services to establish a statewide Restaurant Meals Program, in collaboration with stakeholders including county human services agencies and advocates for CalFresh recipients.

SUPPORT

Women's Foundation of California, Women's Policy Institute (Sponsor)
Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
All of Us or None (Co-Sponsor)
The Dolores Huerta Foundation (Co-Sponsor)
MomsRising (Co-Sponsor)
Alameda County Community Food Bank
California Catholic Conference
California Food Policy Advocates
California State Council of Service Employees
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
Diablo Valley College
Disability Rights California
Feeding San Diego

Food for the People
National Association of Social Workers,
California Chapter
Public Interest Law Project
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara & San
Mateo Counties
Starting Over, Inc.
Yolo Food Bank

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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