

AB 1321

California Nutrition Incentives Act

Assemblymember
Phil Ting
19TH DISTRICT



SUMMARY

Diet is the foundation for good health, and despite our unparalleled agricultural bounty, at least 4 million Californians struggle with food insecurity. AB 1321 would increase access to healthy California grown produce by doubling the purchasing power of low-income Californians at farmers markets across the state. The 2014 federal Farm Bill set aside \$100 million in grants for programs that increase fruit and vegetable purchases among low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase. This bill sets up a state framework to help draw down those federal grants for local nutrition incentive programs that alleviate poverty and food insecurity, maximize access to fresh healthy foods, and stimulate economic growth in both agricultural and urban communities.

BACKGROUND

The California Market Match program was launched in 2009 to encourage low-income families receiving nutrition benefits to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. The program "matches" or doubles the amount of nutrition benefits these families can spend and has expanded operations to over 140 farmers' markets across California and increased the spending power of 37,000 families.

The program benefits low-income families and local farmers. Studies have demonstrated that Market Match increases redemption of CalFresh and other nutrition benefits at participating markets from 132% to 700%, and generates a six-fold return on investment in farmers' market sales. As a result of Market Match, 69% of farmers report that they have new shoppers and 67% of farmers report that they earned more income.

Strong demand for Market Match often outstrips available funding for the program. However, the 2014 federal Farm Bill included \$100 million in grant funding for programs such as Market Match that incentivize healthier eating amongst SNAP recipients. In order to best position local programs to receive these federal grants, AB 1321 creates a state Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program to apply for federal funds and award them to local Market Match programs with a proven record of success. Establishing a state framework to oversee funding of Market Match programs would leverage state resources to streamline local program administration, and expand Market Match programs

across a more equitable cross-section of communities that lack access to fresh produce.

California is uniquely positioned to benefit from greater proliferation of programs such as Market Match. California grows over 400 commodities and produces nearly half of US-grown fruits, nuts and vegetables. We have approximately 700 certified Farmers' Markets and 2,200 certified producers. We also have a large persistent poverty problem to solve. 24% of Californians live in poverty and we rank 50th in the rate of participation in SNAP. Scaling up Market Match programs would create an incentive for more families to utilize their SNAP benefits and ensure more Californians can afford to eat what we grow.

THIS BILL

AB 1321 would enact the California Nutrition Incentives Act, creating the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program within the Office of Farm to Fork at the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The program would award grants to certified farmers' markets that double the amount of nutrition benefits available to low-income consumers when purchasing California fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables. The program would also allow up to one-third of grant funds to be awarded to small businesses that provide such matching nutrition incentives, in order to reach low-income Californians residing in food deserts with limited access to farmers' markets. Grants would be prioritized in disadvantaged communities with a high prevalence of diabetes and obesity to ensure a focus on expanding access to fresh, healthy food.

SUPPORT

Ecology Center (co-sponsor)
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (co-sponsor)
Public Health Institute (co-sponsor)
Roots of Change (co-sponsor)
California Association of Food Banks
California Food Policy Advocates

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