

AB 608 (Gordon)

CalFresh: School Meals

SUMMARY

Research studies have identified multiple negative effects of child hunger. Children who experience hunger are more likely to incur development impairments that limit their physical, intellectual and emotional growth.

In order to solve this problem, California administers several federally funded child nutrition programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is more commonly known as CalFresh, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the National Summer Lunch Program. Even though current law requires direct certification of families for the National School Lunch Program if they live in a home receiving CalFresh benefits, the application process can take considerable time, which only prolongs the challenges faced by these children.

AB 608 addresses this problem by informing families with children about the child nutrition programs they are eligible to receive so that no child goes hungry.

BACKGROUND

Countless reports by pediatricians and public health professionals have shown that even one incident of hunger can impact the life chances of a child. Children who experience hunger are sick more often, are more likely to have to be hospitalized and are more likely to experience growth impairment that precludes their reaching their full physical potential.

Current law requires County Human Services Agencies to compile a list of soup kitchens and food pantries to offer to prospective CalFresh applicants.

While existing statutes do not reference child nutrition programs, research¹ shows that children are especially vulnerable to hunger. Many families do not realize that their CalFresh certification qualifies their children for the National School Lunch Program, or how to apply to the program if their child is in need of a school day meal before their CalFresh eligibility is determined. The CalFresh eligibility application can take up to 30 days to process and, in the meantime, a child can go hungry.

THIS BILL

In order to better inform households applying for CalFresh of resources, AB 608 would require County Human Services agencies to add a list of supplemental food assistance providers to the current list of emergency food providers issued to families. The list would be updated based on information the county receives from emergency and supplemental food assistance providers, cities, school districts, summer lunch providers, the California Department of Education, and the WIC Program.

AB 608 also requires County Human Services agencies to provide an applicant household that has children with information about how to enroll the child in the California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC Program) and the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs while their CalFresh application is pending.

These small but distinct changes would provide struggling families with the ability to better provide for their children. In turn, this change would decrease the likelihood that impacted children fall further behind in their development and studies.

¹ <http://feedingamerica.org/sitefiles/child-economy-study.pdf>

SUPPORT

- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)
- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- California Association of Food Banks
- California Catholic Conference of Bishops
- California Diabetic Association (CDA)
- California Food Policy Advocates
- California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC)
- Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
- Community Food and Justice Coalition
- Feeding American San Diego
- Hunger Advocacy Network
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW-CA)

OPPOSITION

- Department of Finance

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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