

# AB 608 (Gordon)

## CalFresh: School Meals

### SUMMARY

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Research has shown the 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 referred to as CalFresh, the National School Lunch Program, 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 up to 30 days for CalFresh and up to 2 more months to complete the direct certification. 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

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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. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, approximately 81% of households applying for CalFresh have children. Children in households determined eligible for CalFresh are also eligible for the National School Lunch Program. However, the application for CalFresh eligibility can take up to 30 days to process and, in the meantime, a child can go hungry. Additionally, many families do not know that their CalFresh certification can qualify them for the school meal program or how to apply for the program if their child is in need of a schoolday meal before their CalFresh eligibility is determined. This is especially true when a family's change in

circumstance, like loss of job or family illness, makes the family newly eligible after the school year begins.

### THIS BILL

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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 to give to households applying for CalFresh. The list shall 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.

### SUPPORT

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Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)

### OPPOSITION

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None on file

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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