



AB 2413 (Ting/Wiener) – The More CalFresh, Less Hunger Act

Hunger and food insecurity continue to be growing problems in California, caused by a number of factors including income and wealth inequality, an aging state population, a high cost of living, and increased homelessness rates. Hunger is a pervasive issue across the state, affecting individuals, children and families and threatening the state's economy. Children who are hungry are unable to focus on school; hungry adults cannot rise to their potential at work. Chronic hunger can also lead to significant health issues.

CalFresh is a Critical Statewide Tool That Provides Much Needed Food Security

California's CalFresh program provides much-needed nutrition benefits to more than 4 million vulnerable individuals across the state – just over 2 million households at any point in time. While the federal government has made numerous attempts to undermine the SNAP program in recent years, **our state and counties have played a leadership role, undertaking several efforts to enroll more Californians into the CalFresh program.** Among other things, this includes increasing enrollment significantly among seniors and persons with disabilities, primarily by expanding eligibility to include the previously ineligible SSI population.

Although the state has made numerous strides to boost enrollment, California can still improve the current program's enrollment and retention rates. In particular, the state can take greater advantage of existing federal flexibilities to improve the state's overall CalFresh program enrollment and retention rates, as well as by standardizing certain county business process improvements to promote and expand known best practices statewide.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Boost CalFresh Enrollment and Retention Rates in California

In order to boost CalFresh participation, AB 2413 would:

- 1) Reduce the paperwork burden for CalFresh applicants and recipients, to increase enrollment and reduce "churn" in the caseload, allowing more recipients to remain on the program without dropping off due to administrative reasons.
- 2) Require consistent verification procedures statewide and reduce reporting burden in order to make maximum use of existing federal flexibility. The state should also seek additional federal flexibility wherever possible.
- 3) Leverage the state's largest public benefit program, Medi-Cal, to ensure that applicants and enrollees who appear eligible for CalFresh are encouraged to apply and can be found eligible more quickly using the same staff who process Medi-Cal.
- 4) Invest in business processes and technical and strategies, including text messaging, flexible interview practices, and county collaboration with community-based organizations.

Achieving Desired Outcomes: A Modest Investment with Great Potential Returns

While California faces many challenges including chronic homelessness, federal policy challenges, and a rising cost of living, the policy and process changes in AB 2413 will help the state improve access and retention rates in the CalFresh program overall.

The estimated cost of AB 2413 is \$27.0 million General Fund in the budget year, and \$8.6 million ongoing, as much of the upfront costs are one-time in nature. It is anticipated that the bill will increase participation by 10 percentage points over a five-year period, delivering an estimated \$566 million in new federally funded benefits to an additional 200,000 households each year when fully implemented.

When the accepted economic impact of every CalFresh dollar is factored in, such an increase will boost the state's economy by an estimated \$243 million annually. The state would see an increase of \$11 million in revenue annually, due to the economic activity associated with these benefits.

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