



## State Senator Scott Wiener, 11<sup>th</sup> Senate District

### Senate Bill 282-2017

#### SUMMARY

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The Reducing Hunger Among Vulnerable Californians Act of 2017 (SB 282) seeks to address the dual, often overlapping, challenges of joblessness and homelessness for low income Californians. This package of targeted program improvements will increase access to prepared food for low income homeless, elderly or disabled Californians and create real job opportunities for childless homeless adults.

#### BACKGROUND/EXISTING LAW

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Federal law provides food aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California.

For many able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) this help is limited to just three months out of a three-year period unless they are working for at least 20 hours a week or participate in the CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) program.

CalFresh E&T is intended to improve employment skills and work opportunities, thus reducing long-term reliance on CalFresh. Federal rules for CalFresh E&T allow counties to use federal match funding to support specified employment and training activities.

CalFresh Restaurant Meal Program (RMP) allows people who are homeless, elderly or disabled to use their food benefits to purchase prepared meals in participating restaurants. By federal law, participation in the RMP program is voluntary for states, counties and restaurants.

#### PROBLEM

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Despite our state having the fastest overall rate of job growth in the country, many Californians remain unemployed or under-employed and hungry. They have limited access to publicly funded assistance while real job prospects move further and further out of reach.

Subsidized employment is a proven practice that helps low-wage workers to find employment, but California counties are not currently authorized to use federal CalFresh E&T funds to support a subsidized employment program. In order to do so, California must obtain a waiver approved by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Federal law allows states and counties to participate in CalFresh RMP, but some counties are stifled in implementing it because the rules of the program have not been codified in state law and leave open some important questions about county control of the program. Currently, only eight California counties participate in RMP.

#### SOLUTION

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The Reducing Hunger Among Vulnerable Californians Act of 2017 (SB 282) will help some of the most destitute Californians prevent hunger and secure employment by:

- Requiring the Department of Social Services to seek a federal waiver that would allow counties participating in CalFresh E&T to offer subsidized employment to ABAWDs and;
- Codifying the RMP and clarifying that counties can target the program to certain regions or food retailers.

#### SUPPORT

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*This bill is co-sponsored by:*

County Welfare Directors Association of CA  
Coalition of CA Welfare Rights Organizations  
Western Center on Law and Poverty

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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