

Date of Hearing: July 14, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
SB 108 (Hurtado) – As Amended May 20, 2021

Policy Committee: Human Services Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill declares it is the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient and healthy food and requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in consultation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the Department of Conservation (DOC), to submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2023, relating to food access and containing recommendations to increase the availability of sufficient affordable and healthy food. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Declares it is the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient and healthy food.
- 2) Requires all relevant state agencies to consider the state policy described above when revising, adopting or establishing policies, regulations and grant criteria when pertinent to the distribution of food and nutrition assistance.
- 3) States the provisions of this bill do not expand any obligation of the state to provide food or nutrition assistance or to require the expenditure of additional resources to develop food infrastructure.
- 4) Requires, by January 1, 2023, CDSS, in consultation with CDFA and DOC, to submit a report to the Legislature that addresses a number of specified factors, including barriers to accessing food assistance faced by low-income Californians, steps to decrease the cost of food, anticipated impacts of changing water needs, changing weather and changing climate patterns on the state's ability to ensure people have sufficient food and CDSS's recommendations on these issues.
- 5) Repeals the requirement, on January 1, 2027, that CDSS, CDFA and DOC submit a report to the Legislature.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDSS estimates one-time costs of approximately \$155,000 (GF) for one limited-term staff position to lead the development and production of the required report, including facilitating collaboration with other departments.

- 2) CDFA indicates minor and absorbable costs to consult with CDSS regarding the required report and to consider the right to food policy while revising or designing regulations, grant programs or other policies that impact the distribution or availability of food.
- 3) CDPH and DOC's Division of Land Resource Protection each estimate minor and absorbable costs

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill seeks to address food insecurity in California by identifying current barriers to food access as well as anticipated impacts of water needs and climate change on future access.
- 2) **Background.** Food insecurity means having limited, uncertain or inconsistent access to the quality and quantity of food that is necessary to live a healthy life. According to the California Association of Food Banks, after the COVID-19 pandemic began, food insecurity in California spiked to unprecedented levels with more than 25% of California households experiencing food insecurity—2.5 times higher than the rate of food insecurity before the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial and ethnic health disparities became more apparent, with Latino, Black, and other households of color facing higher rates of food insecurity than white households.

California, with the aid of the federal government, has several programs to address food insecurity, including CalFresh, food banks and food hubs, allowing the use of EBT cards at farmers' markets, and school breakfast and lunch programs for children, among others.

According to reports from the California Natural Resources Agency on California's Climate Adaptation Strategy, global warming can cause drought, higher temperatures, saltwater contamination through rising sea levels, flooding and increased risk of pests, all of which pose a serious threat to California's agricultural industry. Because California feeds not only its own residents, but also the entire U.S. and other countries as well, production declines could lead to food shortages and higher prices. This bill requires a report that takes these impacts into consideration when assessing the future of food access.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 534 (Mayes), of the 2019-20 Legislative Session, would have established the "Envision a Hunger-Free California Act of 2019" and would have required CDSS, CDPH, the California Department of Education (CDE) and CDFA to develop a plan to end hunger, which would have included the identification of barriers to food access. AB 534 was held on this committee's suspense file.

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