

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1734 (Stefani) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Health	Vote:	16 - 0
	Higher Education		7 - 1

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

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the Count Hunger Act. The bill requires, upon an appropriation, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in collaboration with the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), establish a two-year pilot program to include food insecurity questions on the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS).

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires CDPH, in collaboration with UCLA, establish a two-year pilot program to include food insecurity questions that were included in the 2025 CHIS, for the 2027 and 2028 calendar years.
- 2) Requires the food insecurity questions apply to all households whose income is at or below 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
- 3) Requires UCLA, in collaboration with CDPH and upon receipt of funding, publish available statewide-, regional-, and county-level food insecurity data, as feasible, on the AskCHIS reporting tool of the CHIS internet website in a manner accessible to the public.
- 4) Conditions implementation upon an appropriation made by the Legislature and resolution by the Regents of the University of California.
- 5) Requires CDPH implement the pilot program in the 2027 and 2028 calendar years, or two subsequent calendar years, depending on the availability of the appropriation.

FISCAL EFFECT:

One-time General Fund costs of approximately \$300,000. The author states the CHIS team at UCLA determined the cost of returning the food insecurity screener portion of the survey and expanding it to those who are 400% FPL would cost \$287,570. The author has submitted a request for this amount in the state budget to fund the pilot program.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) and the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB). According to the author:

This bill will create a pilot to restore funding [for a food insecurity questionnaire on CHIS], an existing survey which asks up to 25,000 Californians questions to understand the unmet needs in our communities. This bill also accounts for the high cost of living in California by increasing the threshold in which food insecurity questions are asked to respondents from 200% FPL to 400% FPL. Hunger doesn't disappear when you stop measuring it, it just becomes easier to ignore.

- 2) **Background.** UCLA's Center for Health Policy and Research states it conducts CHIS to provide data to help target funding, programs, and resources to improve the health outcomes for all Californians. CHIS is conducted online and via telephone to more than 20,000 households, in seven languages, in all 58 counties. Each survey covers a wide range of health topics. Results from the survey are available through a free online tool that allows a user to customize or disaggregate the data by city, county, zip code, and legislative district. UCLA publishes an annual report with a narrative about the data collected by CHIS. Major funders of CHIS include numerous state agencies, including CDPH, and The California Endowment, California Health Care Foundation, and the California Rural Indian Health Board. Each organization generally provides funding for specific topics on the CHIS survey, and costs for questions are based on a proportional division of the total program costs.

On September 20, 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the termination of future Household Food Security Reports. The reports had tracked food insecurity data since 1995. According to a 2025 article published by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the household food insecurity data has served as a consistent national benchmark, guiding solutions and bringing attention to areas of greatest need. The article states the data had been used by policymakers to assess the performance of federal nutrition assistance programs, by researchers to study food insecurity, and by nonprofit organizations and advocacy groups to identify regions and populations with the highest rates of food insecurity, target interventions, and allocate resources efficiently. The article also notes the data supported outreach and public awareness campaigns, helping to mobilize support for efforts to reduce food insecurity.

CAFB and SFMFB note CHIS also measured food security and reached several Asian and Latino subpopulations that the USDA survey could not, and enables analyses of the relationships between food security and health or social conditions. CAFB and SFMFB state funding for CHIS to conduct the food insecurity screener was also recently cut due to the loss of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) grant funding, removing a second key source of data on food security in California.

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