
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair

BILL NO: AB 1734
AUTHOR: Stefani
VERSION: May 18, 2026
HEARING DATE: June 10, 2026
CONSULTANT: Jen Flory

SUBJECT: Count Hunger Act.

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Public Health to establish a two-year pilot program in collaboration with University of California at Los Angeles to ensure that questions regarding food insecurity remain part of the California Health Interview Survey, subject to appropriation and outside funding.

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), directed by a state Public Health Officer, to be vested with all the duties, powers, purposes, functions, responsibilities, and jurisdiction as they relate to public health and licensing of health facilities, as specified. [HSC §131050]
- 2) Authorizes the director of CDPH to accept gifts of money from public agencies or from organizations or associations organized for scientific, educational, or charitable purposes. [HSC §131057]
- 3) Defines “food insecurity” as the occasional or constant lack of access to the food one needs to live a healthy life and the uncertainty of being able to acquire enough food to meet the needs of an individual or household due to insufficient money or other resources. [WIC §187000]
- 4) Declares that it is established state policy that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food and requires all relevant state agencies, including CDPH, to consider this state policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria when those policies, regulations, and grant criteria are pertinent to the distribution of sufficient affordable food. [WIC §187000]
- 5) Establishes the University of California (UC) as a public trust, to be administered by the existing corporation known as “The Regents of the University of California,” with full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure the security of its funds and compliance with the terms of the endowments of the UC and such competitive bidding procedures as may be made applicable to the UC by statute for the letting of construction contracts, sales of real property, and purchasing of materials, goods, and services. [CONS Article IX §9(a)]

This bill:

- 1) Defines the “California Health Interview Survey” (CHIS) as the statewide health survey administered by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in collaboration with state departments and other agencies, and conducted annually through interviews with thousands of households in the state. The survey addresses various health matters, including, but not limited to, use of and access to health care, health conditions and behaviors, and a

range of topics that influence health, such as public program participation, housing, income and employment, climate change, food, gun violence, and adverse childhood experiences.

- 2) Requires CDPH to establish a two-year pilot program, in collaboration with UCLA, to ensure that the sets of questions linked to food insecurity, as those sets were implemented in the CHIS for the 2025 calendar year, are funded and covered within the CHIS for the 2027 and 2028 calendar years, or two subsequent calendar years, whichever is earlier based on the availability of appropriated funds.
- 3) Requires that within the sample of households surveyed for CHIS purposes, the CHIS portion relating to food insecurity applies to all households whose income is at or below 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
- 4) Requires UCLA, in collaboration with CDPH, and upon receipt of funding pursuant to this bill, to publish any available statewide-, regional-, and county-level data, as feasible, that are linked to the food insecurity portion on the AskCHIS reporting tool of the CHIS website in a manner accessible to the public and that excludes any personally identifiable information.
- 5) Conditions implementation of this bill on: a) an appropriation made by the Legislature for this purpose; b) the appropriation consists of moneys from grants or other contributions from local, private, or philanthropic sources for the purposes expressed in this chapter; and, c) the UC Regents adopt this bill by resolution with regards to the portions pertaining to UCLA.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee this bill would have 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.

PRIOR VOTES:

Assembly Floor:	71 - 1
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	12 - 0
Assembly Higher Education Committee	7 - 1
Assembly Health Committee:	16 - 0

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author’s statement.* According to the author, this bill creates a pilot to secure funding to the CHIS’s food insecurity questionnaire. This pilot will survey thousands of food insecure Californians and adapt current research methods to account for the high cost of living in the state. With nationwide social safety net program changes, our most vulnerable are at risk of falling through the cracks. This bill ensures that California will continue to Count Hunger because food insecurity doesn’t disappear when you stop measuring it, it just becomes easier to ignore.
- 2) *Cancellation of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Household Food Security report.* The USDA has tracked food insecurity in the United States through its annual Household Food Security report since 1995. According to the latest 2024 report, an estimated 18.3 million households (13.7%) were food insecure. In September of 2025, the USDA announced it would terminate future Household Food Security reports, calling the reports subjective, liberal fodder; and stating that trends in the prevalence of food insecurity have remained

virtually unchanged despite an 87% increase in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or CalFresh in California) spending between 2019 and 2023. However, according to an October 15, 2025 blog post by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the survey actually showed that food insecurity dropped to its lowest level in 2021 (10.2% of households), thanks largely to the economic stimulus measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet once the assistance expired, two years later, the rates went up to 13.5% of households. Months before the USDA announcement, H.R. 1 was enacted which made significant changes to SNAP including expanding work requirements, narrowing noncitizen eligibility, ending nutrition education, and limiting how maximum benefits would be calculated in the future, along with a number of measures designed to shift costs of the program to the state. Such changes are expected to decrease the number of people who have access to food assistance through the program.

- 3) *CHIS collection of food insecurity in California.* According to UCLA, CHIS interviews over 20,000 households a year on a wide range of health matters, including health care coverage, health conditions, and topics that influence health such, as housing, income, employment, climate change, gun violence, and adverse childhood experiences. CHIS has asked questions about food security since its launch in 2001. In 2024, 47.2% of California adults with incomes below 200% FPL said they could not afford enough food. This bill is intended to ensure that this survey continues as well as expand which Californians would be interviewed to include those with incomes up to 400% FPL.
- 4) *Double referral.* This bill is double referred. Should it pass out of this committee, it will be referred to the Senate Committee on Education.
- 5) *Related legislation.* SB 1025 (Hurtado) establishes the Office of Food Security and Affordability to coordinate statewide food insecurity outreach, cooperate with research organizations, establish best practices for food banks and emergency food responders and develop a strategic plan to address gaps in food assistance, among other things. *SB 1025 is set for hearing on June 16, 2026 in the Assembly Human Services Committee.*

AB 1618 (Rogers) requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to annually conduct a statewide survey to assess food insecurity in California, modeled after a specified federal survey, unless a comparable federal survey is conducted that year. *AB 1618 was held on the Assembly Appropriations suspense file.*

- 6) *Prior legislation.* AB 1967 (Jackson of 2024) would have established a Food Insecurity Officer within CDSS to coordinate and address food insecurity across state government operations and prepare an annual report on food insecurity in California. *AB 1967 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.*

SB 628 (Hurtado, Chapter 879, Statutes of 2023) declares the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food and requires relevant state agencies to consider this policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria when pertinent to the distribution of sufficient affordable food.

- 7) *Support.* Co-sponsors the California Association of Food Banks and the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank write that CHIS's collection of food security information provides both county-level data and data on several Asian and Latine populations that USDA survey data

could not. They also point to Brookings Institute and USDA data showing that anywhere from 20% to 33% of food insecure households are in higher income households than is currently being captured, thus asking the questions to individuals in households of up to 400% of the federal poverty level is warranted. They also state that this bill helps to fill the gap left by the cancellation of the federal USDA food security.

- 8) *Policy comment.* While securing funding for state data tracking food insecurity at a time that both the federal food assistance program and federal data on the scope of the problem have been cut makes sense, as currently drafted, this bill adds layers of complexity to securing funding for the issue. This bill would require a legislative appropriation of funds that are private, philanthropic, or local for a small grant to be administered by CDPH. An outside grant directly to UCLA would likely be easier and more timely to obtain.

SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:

Support: California Association of Food Banks (co-sponsor)
 San Francisco-Marín Food Bank (co-sponsor)
 AARP
 Beverly Hills Synagogue
 Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco
 California Food and Farming Network
 California Food Recovery Coalition
 California Grocers Association
 California Immigrant Policy Center
 Californians Against Waste
 Californians for Supplemental Security Income
 Children's Council of San Francisco
 City and County of San Francisco
 City of Emeryville
 Community Action Marin
 County of Marin
 County of Napa
 County of Santa Clara
 County Welfare Directors Association of California
 Democrats for Israel Los Angeles
 DoorDash
 Edgewood Center for Children and Families
 ExtraFood
 First 5 California
 Five Keys
 Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County
 Glad Tidings Church
 GLIDE
 Hadassah, the Women's Zionist of America, Inc.
 Hillel of San Diego
 JCC-Federation of San Luis Obispo
 Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) Bay Area
 JCRC Santa Barbara County
 JCRC Jewish Long Beach
 Jewish California
 Jewish Center for Justice

Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Democratic Club of Marin
Jewish Family and Children's Services
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Federation Bay Area
Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara
Jewish Federation of Orange County
Jewish Federation of the Desert
Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys
Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation
Jewish Silicon Valley
Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS) East Bay
JFCS Long Beach and Orange County
Justice in Aging
Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) Bay Area
JVS SoCal
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Marin Food Policy Council
Mazon: a Jewish Response to Hunger
Menorah Park
Mission Language Vocational School
Mom's Meal
National Council of Jewish Women of San Francisco
North Marin Community Services
Nourish California
Ritter Center
San Francisco Food Security Task Force
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
StopWaste
The Richmond Neighborhood Center
Westside Food Bank
One individual

Oppose: None received

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