

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2299 (Calderon) – As Amended April 6, 2026

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 5 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill expands California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) eligibility to include individuals ineligible for CalFresh benefits due to the federal time limits placed on able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) and individuals ineligible solely due to their humanitarian immigration status. The bill also repeals the provisions requiring certain federal benefits be provided in order for CFAP to be implemented.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Renames the California Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants as the California Food Assistance Program.
- 2) Strikes references to Public Law 104-193 and any subsequent amendments relating to CFAP eligibility for noncitizens of the United States (U.S.) whose immigration status meets the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility criteria in effect on August 21, 1996, but who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits solely due to immigration status.
- 3) Expands CFAP eligibility to include individuals ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to the federal time limits placed on ABAWDs, regardless of whether they are a citizen or noncitizen, and humanitarian immigration status.
- 4) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to use state CFAP funds to provide nutrition benefits to individuals ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to the federal ABAWD time limit, regardless of citizenship status, and humanitarian immigration status.
- 5) Clarifies that the benefit amount of a CFAP recipient who is an excluded member of a CalFresh household is limited to the amount the recipient would have received as their share of a CalFresh household benefit, had they not been excluded due to their humanitarian status or expired federal time limit.
- 6) Strikes the requirement that CFAP be implemented only when certain federal benefits are provided.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of at least \$1 billion annually to expand CFAP to provide benefits to approximately 660,000 persons discontinued from CalFresh benefits as a result of federal limitations. This estimate assumes approximately 840,000 individuals will become subject to the work requirement beginning June 1, 2026. Of these individuals, approximately 660,000 will not meet the work requirement or qualify for an allowable exemption, meaning they are likely to lose access to CalFresh benefits three months after they are screened. CDSS estimates in 2026-27, the average monthly benefit per discontinued time-limited individual is \$260.45 and that approximately 108,600 individuals will lose benefits each month.
- 2) Ongoing GF costs of approximately \$190,000 to \$200,000 to expand CFAP to include approximately 72,000 noncitizens discontinued from CalFresh under federal House Resolution 1 (H.R.1) (Public Law 119-21).
- 3) CDSS estimates ongoing GF administrative costs of an unknown amount, likely in the range of \$800,000 to \$1.3 million, to support five to eight staff positions to implement the changes in the bill.
- 4) One-time GF automation costs of an unknown amount for changes to the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS).
- 5) Ongoing costs counties to administer expanded CFAP benefits. In April, the Department of Finance approved \$20 million to provide counties one-time funding to support administrative implementation of H.R.1 ABAWD provisions.

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.** According to the author:

As our version of the federal SNAP program, CalFresh has helped millions of Californians afford groceries for their families. However, with the signing of H.R. 1 President Trump drastically cut federal funding to SNAP and CalFresh. Specifically, H.R. 1 initiates stricter work requirements, removes eligibility for certain lawfully present immigrants, and shifts billions of dollars in program costs from the federal government onto states. If we do not act as a state, nearly a million Californians will lose access to CALFRESH, that helps put food on the table.

- 2) **Background. CalFresh.** The CalFresh program is California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides monthly food assistance to qualifying low-income households. CalFresh benefits are 100% federally funded. Costs to administer the program are shared among the federal government, the state and counties. Under federal law, CalFresh benefits are available to U.S. citizens and, under narrow circumstances, lawfully-present non-U.S. citizens, referred to as lawful permanent residents (LPRs). CDSS administers approximately \$12.6 billion federal SNAP funds annually through the CalFresh program, serving about 5.5 million CalFresh participants.

CFAP. California provides state-funded food benefits through the CFAP program for individuals in limited categories of legal immigrant status (meaning refugees and victims of domestic violence) who are not eligible for federal CalFresh benefits due solely to their immigration status. CFAP benefits are equivalent to those provided by CalFresh. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, CFAP benefits totaled approximately \$130 million for 28,900 households. Under the Budget Act of 2024, the state plans to expand CFAP eligibility to include all adults 55 years of age and older, regardless of immigration status, starting in 2027.

Federal Impacts of H.R.1. In July 2025, President Trump signed H.R.1, which included cuts to SNAP that reduce food assistance for millions of families. There are various populations of Californians that are eligible for CalFresh, including those referred to as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, or “ABAWDs.”

Under CalFresh rules, ABAWDs are generally limited to three months of benefits within a 36-month period. Existing law exempts ABAWDs from this time limit if the ABAWD is over age 54, lives in a household that includes children under age 18, is pregnant, is unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation, is a former foster youth under age 24, is a veteran, is homeless, or is living in an area for which the time limit was waived due to an area unemployment rate of more than 10% or with a demonstrated lack of sufficient jobs.

Federal H.R.1 changed the ABAWD time-limit rules by expanding the age range subject to the time limit to adults through age 64, requiring an eligible household to have a child under age 14, eliminating the exemptions for former foster youth, veterans and homeless individuals, and limiting state and county waiver eligibility. These changes take effect June 1, 2026, and are expected to increase the number of individuals subject to the time limit and at risk of losing CalFresh benefits.

CDSS estimates these changes will increase the non-exempt ABAWD population from about 345,400 to 954,800 individuals, with approximately 665,500 individuals expected to be newly subject to the time limit and potentially lose CalFresh eligibility, including 250,000 homeless individuals. The remaining 289,000 individuals are expected to either meet work requirements or qualify for an exemption. CDSS expects these changes to occur gradually over 12 months during annual recertifications.

In addition, H.R.1 narrowed noncitizen eligibility for SNAP to U.S. citizens, noncitizen U.S. nationals, LPRs, individuals residing in the U.S. under a Compact of Free Association, and Cuban and Haitian entrants. Effective April 1, 2026, several categories of lawfully present noncitizens who are not LPRs are no longer eligible, including refugees, asylees, parolees (unless they are Cuban and Haitian entrants), individuals with deportation or removal withheld, conditional entrants, trafficking survivors, battered noncitizens, and certain Afghan and Ukrainian parolees. These individuals may become eligible for CalFresh or CFAP if they adjust to LPR status and meet or are exempt from the five-year waiting period.

This bill expands CFAP to provide state-funded food benefits to individuals who lose CalFresh eligibility solely due to the federal ABAWD time limit or who are ineligible for CalFresh solely due to their humanitarian immigration status.