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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 2299  
**Author:** Calderon  
**Version:** April 6, 2026  
**Urgency:** No  
**Consultant:** Naima Ford Antal  
**Hearing Date:** June 29, 2026  
**Fiscal:** Yes

**Subject:** California Antihunger Response and Employment Training Act of 2026

### SUMMARY

This bill expands eligibility for the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to include certain individuals who become ineligible for CalFresh due to changes created by federal House Resolution 1 (Public Law 119-21), regardless of whether they are a citizen or noncitizen.

### ABSTRACT

#### Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes under federal law, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to promote the general welfare and to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. (*7 United States Code [USC] Section 2011 et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes citizenship requirements for SNAP benefits, including that undocumented immigrants are not eligible for SNAP. (*7 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 273.4*)
- 3) Requires, as a condition of eligibility for SNAP benefits, each non-exempt household member to comply with work requirements, which may include, registering for work, participating in an employment and training program, or participating in a workfare program. (*7 CFR 273.7(a)(1)(iii)*)
- 4) Requires able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) to only be eligible for SNAP for three months during a three-year period unless they qualify for an exemption. (*7 CFR 273.24*)
- 5) Allows a state agency to waive the ABAWD time limit requirements for a group of individuals if it is determined that the area the individuals live in has:
  - a. An unemployment rate of 10% or more; or
  - b. Does not have enough jobs to provide employment for the individuals. (*7 CFR 273.24(f)*)

- 6) Establishes the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting specified criteria. (*Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] 18900 et seq.*)
- 7) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) annually, to the extent permitted by federal law, to seek a federal SNAP waiver to the three-month limit in a three-year period of CalFresh benefits for an ABAWD, unless that participant has met the work participation requirement, as provided. (*WIC 18926*)
- 8) Requires CDSS to establish a food assistance program for immigrants, titled the Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants (CFAP), to provide aid to people who are not eligible for federal SNAP benefits due solely to their immigration status. (*WIC 18930 et seq.*)
- 9) Requires CFAP benefits provided to household be identical to amount of CalFresh received if household was eligible. (*WIC 18930(d)(1)*)
- 10) Requires, except as otherwise stated, the federal and state laws and regulations governing SNAP to also govern food assistance program, except as specified in law. (*WIC 18932 (a)*)

**This Bill:**

- 1) Makes findings and declarations about the impact of the federal House Resolution 1 (Public Law 119-21) on CalFresh recipients that will be newly ineligible, including restricted access to the CalFresh Employment and Training Program.
- 2) Renames the food assistance program the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) instead of the Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants in all parts of state statute.
- 3) Removes references to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.
- 4) Makes individuals who are ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to the federal time limits placed on ABAWDs, eligible for CFAP, regardless of whether they are a citizen or noncitizen.
- 5) Makes individuals who are ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to their humanitarian immigration status, eligible for CFAP.
- 6) Requires CDSS to use state funds appropriated for CFAP to provide nutrition benefits to households that are ineligible for CalFresh benefits due to ABAWD work requirements or immigration status.
- 7) Expands the requirement that if a CFAP recipient is a member of a household receiving CalFresh, that their benefit be equal to what they would receive if they were enrolled in CalFresh as a part of the household, to humanitarian immigrants and ABAWD CFAP recipients.

- 8) Strikes the provision requiring CFAP benefits to only be provided during a period when federal benefits are required.

### FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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 with one-time funding to support administrative implementation of H.R.1 ABAWD provisions.

### BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

#### **Purpose of the Bill:**

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.”

*CalFresh*

CalFresh is California's version of federal SNAP, an entitlement program that provides eligible households with federally funded monthly benefits to purchase food. Currently, CalFresh food benefits are 100% federally funded, but recent changes in federal law will require states to pay a portion of the benefit. CalFresh administration costs are funded with 50% federal funds, 35% General Fund, and 15% county funds, except for state-mandated program changes. Benefits are delivered through an EBT card which cardholders can use at point-of-sale terminals authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Grocers and other retailers are paid directly by the federal government for the dollar value of purchases made with CalFresh food benefits. Monthly benefits per household vary based on household size, income, and deductible living expenses. Larger households generally receive more benefits than smaller households and relatively higher-income households generally receive fewer benefits than lower-income households. The average benefit in 2025-2026 is approximately \$333 per month for all households.

*California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)*

Under federal law, CalFresh benefits are not available to certain non-citizens. However, California provides state-funded food assistance through CFAP for a limited group of qualified non-citizens who are not eligible for federal benefits due to their immigration status. Like CalFresh, CFAP benefits are provided via EBT cards and can only be used to purchase food products authorized under CalFresh.

CFAP was created in response to passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, which restricted federal eligibility for aid to immigrant populations entering the United States. However, income and other federal eligibility requirements, as well as benefit amounts, for CFAP align with those for CalFresh.

California law identifies specific categories of lawfully present immigrants who are eligible for CFAP benefits as follows:

- Lawful permanent residents (green card holders).
- Cuban/Haitian entrants.
- Individuals residing in the US from a Compact of Free Association country (Micronesia, Palau, and Marshall Islands).

Before H.R. 1, immigrants that fell into the categories below were also eligible for CFAP:

- Refugees, those receiving asylum, persons granted withholding of deportation/removal, conditional entry or paroled into the U.S. for at least one year.
- Domestic violence victims and their children.
- Victims of trafficking.

In 2025-26, about 58,000 households received CFAP with an average monthly benefit of \$366 per household and \$176 per person.

### *House Resolution 1 (H.R. 1)*

H.R. 1 was signed into law on July 4, 2025. This law will increase the federal deficit by trillions of dollars and seeks to partially offset costs by, among other things, limiting eligibility and federal funding for food assistance programs. Over the next ten years, H.R. 1 will make almost \$200 billion in cuts to SNAP. In California, that amounts to a \$1.7 to \$3.7 billion cut annually.

### *Non-Citizen CalFresh Eligibility*

Recent changes in the federal bill, H.R. 1, changed the CalFresh eligibility rule for noncitizens and disqualifies certain noncitizen groups from being eligible for CalFresh assistance. The changes will limit eligibility for CalFresh to lawful permanent residents, Cuban Haitian entrants, and residents from Compact of Free Association nations. The bill also made certain individuals who are lawfully present through humanitarian immigration processes that were eligible for CalFresh, no longer eligible under H.R. 1. These individuals include:

- Refugees, asylees, and people granted withholding of removal (based on fear of prosecution).
- Trafficking survivors.
- Survivors of domestic violence who have filed a self-petition under Violence Against Women Act.
- Persons granted humanitarian parole for a period of at least one year.

Since eligibility requirements for CalFresh also apply to CFAP, individuals in the categories above also are not eligible for CFAP. This bill will make them eligible for CFAP if they otherwise meet the eligibility standards and were made ineligible solely due to federal H.R. 1 changes. According to the California Budget and Policy Center, 36% of those ineligible due to this rule change will be children and 10% are seniors or adults with a disability.<sup>1</sup> According to CDSS, about 34,000 individuals currently enrolled in CalFresh will lose assistance because of this change but the impact may be larger because declines in enrollment have already increased. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, participation in CalFresh and CFAP declined in 2026 due to eligibility requirements and possibly a chilling effect. Participation in CFAP has had a steeper decline than CalFresh.

### *Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs)*

Before H.R. 1, a person who was 18 to 54 years old, able to work, and did not have any dependents but otherwise fulfilled CalFresh income requirements was considered an ABAWD. As established with the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, under the ABAWD time limit, ABAWDs can only receive SNAP (CalFresh)

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<sup>1</sup> [calbudgetcenter.org/resources/h-r-1-worsens-hunger-among-immigrant-families-in-california/](https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/h-r-1-worsens-hunger-among-immigrant-families-in-california/)

benefits for three months in three years unless they work at least 80 hours per month, participate in a qualifying education and training activity for at least 80 hours per month, or comply with a workfare program. ABAWDs can also satisfy these requirements by participating in the CalFresh Education & Training program. Certain groups were given exceptions to the ABAWD work and time limit requirements despite being an adult without dependents or disabilities. Those groups include people who are:

- Over 54 years old.
- In a household with children under 18 years old.
- Pregnant.
- Unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation.
- Adults 24 years old or younger who aged out of foster care.
- Veterans.
- Adults experiencing homelessness.
- Living in a work surplus area where the ABAWD time limit was waived, specifically areas that had an unemployment rate of more than 10% or with a demonstrated lack of sufficient jobs.

Due to high unemployment rates, California has been designated a “work surplus area” and therefore, every adult CalFresh recipient has been operating with a waiver to the ABAWD time limit rules. Under current state law, CDSS is annually required to apply for a federal exemption to the ABAWD rule if the state meets certain federal criteria related to high unemployment. The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services has approved California for a statewide ABAWD waiver many times, most recently in January of 2025 and would have been effective through January 2027. However, after the passage of H.R. 1, the Food and Nutrition Service rescinded and ended the state’s ABAWD waiver effective November 2, 2025, for most counties and will end it effective October 31, 2026, for Colusa, Imperial, and Tulare counties.

Under H.R. 1, the number of ABAWD exceptions has decreased and the number of people who are considered to be ABAWDs and required to work to receive CalFresh benefits have increased. There is no longer a time limit and work requirement exceptions for:

- Adults 55-64 years old.
- Parents and caretakers with children 14 and older.
- Veterans.
- People experiencing homelessness.

- Former foster youth.

States can apply for new waivers to pause these rules, but only in areas with 10% or higher unemployment as described in H.R. 1. The new law does add a new exception for indigenous peoples if the person falls under one of the federal definitions for “Indian”, “Urban Indian” or “California Indian”.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the new ABAWD rules may cause a significant reduction of participation among the affected groups nationally. The Office wrote, “[These] provisions will reduce participation in SNAP by roughly 2.4 million people in an average month over the 2025-2034 period. Of those people, about 800,000 will be able-bodied adults through age 64 who do not live with dependent children. Another 300,000 will be able-bodied adults ages 18 to 64 who live with children who are age 14 or older. And roughly 1 million will be able-bodied adults ages 18 to 54 (or 18 to 49, starting in 2031) who do not live with dependents but who, in the CBO’s January 2025 baseline projections (which preceded the law’s enactment), would have received a waiver from the work requirements.”<sup>2</sup> According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office, 562,000 people in California are at risk of losing CalFresh benefits due to the decreased number of exceptions to the ABWAD requirement. This bill would allow people who lose CalFresh benefits because they are ABAWDs and do not qualify for the time limit or work requirement exceptions to receive CFAP benefits, regardless of their citizenship status.

#### **Related/Prior Legislation:**

***SB 1201 (McNearney)*** requires CDSS to submit waiver requests to the federal Department of Agriculture to allow costs incurred by veterans during a job search to be excluded from CalFresh income eligibility determinations and to exempt certain veterans from CalFresh work requirements. SB 1201 is pending in the Assembly.

***AB 311 (Santiago, 2024)*** would have removed the 55 years and older age limit for noncitizens eligible for the CFAP if the noncitizens satisfy all eligibility criteria for participation in CalFresh except any requirements related to immigration status. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

***AB 1965 (Wicks, 2022)*** would have required CDSS to establish the California Antihunger Response and Employment Training Act of 2022 to provide state-funded food assistance benefits to persons no longer eligible for CalFresh due to the federal ABAWD time limits or ineligibility for other exemptions. AB 1965 was vetoed.

***SB 628 (Hurtado, Chapter 879, Statutes of 2023)*** declares that it is the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food and requires relevant agencies to consider that right when making policies.

***SB 187 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 50, Statutes of 2022)*** among other things, removes the requirement that CFAP applicants provide a social security number if they do not have one and eliminates the work requirement for CFAP participants when the CFAP expansion is implemented.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-08/61367-SNAP.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-08/61367-SNAP.pdf)

**COMMENTS**

This bill allows people who would not be eligible for CalFresh due to policy changes in H.R. 1 to be eligible for CFAP. The H.R. 1 changes to eligibility of ABAWDs and certain noncitizens, the two groups identified in this bill, have been enacted this year. As the year continues, more and more people will lose their food benefits due to the changes. This bill expands the eligibility of an existing state program to make up for the shrinking federal program. Access to CFAP could fill in a potential gap in benefits and decrease the predicted levels of food insecurity that many experts believe will occur due to H.R. 1. According to a report by the Alliance to End Hunger, nationally, “up to 6 billion meals may be lost each year due to the changes being brought about via H.R.1. That’s more than the entire Feeding America network of food banks, meal programs, and church pantries provided last year.”<sup>3</sup> This bill attempts to decrease the number of skipped meals in California by allowing more people to access CFAP.

**PRIOR VOTES**

Assembly Floor:	64 - 1
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Human Services Committee:	5 - 0

**POSITIONS**

**Support:**

- California Association of Food Banks (Co-Sponsor)
- California Immigrant Policy Center (Co-Sponsor)
- Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organization (Co-Sponsor)
- Grace - End Child Poverty CA (Co-Sponsor)
- Nourish California (Co-Sponsor)
- Public Interest Law Project (Co-Sponsor)
- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
- Aapis for Civic Empowerment
- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) Action
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
- Asian Law Alliance
- Bay Area Legal Aid
- Berkeley Food Network
- Bill Wilson Center
- California Alliance for Retired Americans
- California Center for Movement Legal Services
- California Domestic Workers Coalition

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<sup>3</sup> [alliancetoendhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/08.25-Impacts-of-H.R.1-Final.pdf](http://alliancetoendhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/08.25-Impacts-of-H.R.1-Final.pdf)

California Family Resource Association  
California Food and Farming Network  
California Lgbtq Health and Human Services Network  
California Work & Family Coalition  
Central California Food Bank  
Centro Legal De LA Raza  
Child Abuse Prevention Center and its Affiliates Safe Kids California, Prevent Child Abuse  
California and the California Family Resource Association; the  
Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County  
Courage California  
Cpca Advocates  
Disability Rights California  
East Bay Leadership Council  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Feeding San Diego  
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County  
Food in Need of Distribution Food Bank  
Foodshare Ventura County  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Fullwell  
G.r.a.c.e. Social and Medical Services  
Glide Foundation  
Homeless Action Center  
Housing California  
Hunger Action Los Angeles  
Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank  
Jfcs East Bay  
LA Best Babies Network  
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley  
Legal Aid of Sonoma County  
Legal Services of Northern California  
Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa  
Los Angeles Food Policy Council  
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California  
Maternal and Child Health Access  
Mujeres Unidas Y Activas  
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County  
Nextgen California  
Office of Kat Taylor  
Orange County United Way  
Para Los Niños  
Parent Voices  
Prosper CA Coalition (formerly Caleitc Coalition)  
Redf  
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services

Sacred Heart Community Service  
San Diego for Every Child  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
San Diego; County of  
San Francisco-marin Food Bank  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County  
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County  
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley  
The Resource Connection Food Bank  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley  
United Ways of California  
Westside Food Bank  
Women's Foundation California  
Young Invincibles  
Yuba Sutter Food Bank

**Oppose:**

None received

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