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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### **AB 2299 (Calderon) - California Antihunger Response and Employment Training Act of 2026**

**Version:** April 6, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** August 3, 2026

**Policy Vote:** HUMAN S. 5 - 0

**Mandate:** Yes

**Consultant:** Agnes Lee

**Bill Summary:** AB 2299 would expand eligibility for the California Food Assistance Program.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) estimates the following General Fund costs:
  - Costs of \$1.6 billion starting in 2027-28, and ongoing annual costs of \$2.9 billion when fully implemented in 2029-30, for benefits, county administration, and automation. If CDSS opts to find prospects for employment and training opportunities for individuals, there would be additional costs for that effort.
  - State operations costs of \$1,767,000 in 2026-27 and \$1,721,000 ongoing thereafter.
- Costs to counties for administration would be potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

**Background:** CalFresh is California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an entitlement program that provides eligible households with monthly benefits to purchase food. Benefits are delivered through an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card which cardholders can use at authorized point-of-sale terminals. 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. CDSS provides oversight for the CalFresh program at the state level, and counties are responsible for eligibility determinations and administration at the local level.

**California Food Assistance Program (CFAP).** CFAP provides state-funded food benefits for certain lawfully present noncitizens who do not qualify for federal CalFresh benefits. In order to be eligible to CFAP, noncitizens must currently be ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to their immigration status under the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. For example, CFAP-eligible individuals include noncitizens who are lawful permanent residents who have not met the five-year U.S. residency requirement. State law requires that, subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act, an individual 55 years of age or older is eligible for CFAP if the individual's immigration status is the sole basis for

their ineligibility for CalFresh benefits. However, this provision only becomes operative on the date that the CDSS notifies the Legislature that the Statewide Automated Welfare System can perform the necessary automation for implementation. Counties are responsible for eligibility determinations and administration at the local level.

**H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21).** H.R. 1 made significant changes to the SNAP program, impacting California's CalFresh program. This included changes to the work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs). Federal rules impose time limits on benefits for ABAWDs unless the individuals are meeting specified work requirements. Under H.R. 1, the exemptions from ABAWD work requirements will decrease, and the number of people required to work to receive CalFresh benefits will increase. The work requirements will increase in most cases to include those 55 to 64 years old. Work requirements will also apply to parents and caretakers with children 14 and older, whereas previously those with children under 18 were excluded. Additionally, exemptions for veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth will be eliminated. The new law adds a new exemption for indigenous peoples, as defined. States can apply for federal waivers to pause these rules, but only under specified criteria.

H.R. 1 also made certain individuals who are lawfully present through humanitarian immigration processes that were eligible for CalFresh, no longer eligible for the program. These individuals include, but are not limited to:

- Refugees.
- Asylees.
- Individuals with deportation or removal withheld.
- Trafficking survivors.
- Survivors of domestic violence.

Currently, since eligibility requirements for CalFresh also apply generally to CFAP, individuals in the categories above who are no longer eligible for CalFresh due to H.R. 1 are not eligible for CFAP.

**Proposed Law:** Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Require that the following individuals are eligible for the CFAP:
  - Individuals ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to the federal time limits placed on ABAWDs, regardless of if they are a citizen or noncitizen.
  - Individuals ineligible for CalFresh benefits solely due to their humanitarian immigration status.
- State that the Legislature encourages the CDSS to find prospects for comparable employment and training opportunities for individuals receiving benefits through the CFAP.

**Related Legislation:**

SB 1201 (McNerney) would require the CDSS to request specified federal waivers related to veterans' eligibility for CalFresh benefits. The bill is currently in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1049 (Celeste Rodriguez) would delete the requirement that federal sponsor-deeming rules apply to the CFAP. The bill is currently on the suspense file in this committee.

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