

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2535 (Gallagher) – As Amended March 16, 2026

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 6 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill revises state policy declaring every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food to, instead, declare every human being has the right to access sufficient locally grown and raised, affordable and healthy food.

In addition, this bill:

- 1) Updates, to reflect the revised state policy, the existing requirement that all relevant state agencies consider the policy when revising, adopting, or establishing pertinent policies, regulations, and grant criteria, and defines relevant state agencies to include, but not be limited to, the Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the State Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), the State Department of Education (CDE), and the State Department of Public Health (CDPH).
- 2) Requires the relevant state agencies, within existing resources, to identify opportunities and strategies to improve farm-to-fork infrastructure, including, but not limited to, systems that support increased access to and use of California locally grown and raised food in public programs, particularly school meals and other nutrition initiatives.
- 3) Requires the Trustees of the California State University and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, and encourages the Regents of the University of California, (higher education boards) to also consider this state policy in their policies, guidelines, and procurement practices related to campus food services and student nutrition.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Minor and absorbable costs (General Fund (GF), various funds) to CDSS, CDFA, DHCS, CDE, CDPH, and various other state agencies to instead consider the right to California locally grown and raised food while revising or designing regulations, grant programs or other policies that impact the distribution or availability of food.
- 2) One-time costs (GF, various funds) of an unknown amount, but likely in the low tens of thousands of dollars statewide, for CDSS, CDFA, DHCS, CDE, and CDPH to identify opportunities and strategies to improve farm-to-fork infrastructure. The bill directs state agencies to do this within existing resources.

- 3) Likely minor and absorbable costs (various funds) to the higher education boards to consider the state food policy in their policies, guidelines, and procurement practices related to campus food services and student nutrition.
- 4) Potential GF cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount to the extent changes in department policies, regulations, and criteria related to supporting “locally grown and raised” affordable and healthy food access result in increased costs for food programs.

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:

California produces the healthiest, safest, and most sustainable food in the world—right here in our own fields. Yet current state policy recognizes every Californian’s right to healthy food without ever prioritizing the fresh, nutrient-rich, locally grown and raised options our farmers produce, allowing ultra-processed foods to dominate over 60% of our children’s calories. [This bill] closes this critical gap by updating the state’s Healthy Food Access Policy to explicitly include California-grown whole foods and directing agencies to strengthen farm-to-fork infrastructure, with a particular focus on school meals.

- 2) **Background.** Existing law 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. Data from the United States (U.S.) Census Household Pulse Survey shows that in September 2024, 22% of California households were food insecure and 27% of households with children were food insecure.

California, with the aid of the federal government, provides several programs to address food insecurity, including CalFresh, administered by CDSS, the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, administered by CDE, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, administered by CDPH, and several nutrition programs that provide meals for older adults, administered by CDA.

Existing law declares it is the policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food. Existing law requires all relevant state agencies to consider this state policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria when pertinent to the distribution of sufficient affordable food.

This bill revises this policy to, instead, declare every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food that is locally grown and raised, and requires state agencies and higher education boards to consider this new state policy when adopting relevant policies, regulations, and criteria.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** SB 444 (Hurtado), of this legislative session is substantially similar to this bill. SB 444 was held on this committee’s suspense file.

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