
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Senator Susan Rubio

Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 1025 **Hearing Date:** 4/14/2026
Author: Hurtado
Version: 3/26/2026 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Brian Duke

SUBJECT: Office of Food Security and Affordability

DIGEST: This bill establishes the Office of Food Security and Affordability (OFSA) and requires the OFSA to collaborate with appropriate state agencies to, among other things, coordinate statewide outreach for food insecurity programs, establish and maintain a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline, and establish best practices for food banks and emergency food providers, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Declares, that it is the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food.
- 2) Establishes various food assistance programs, including, among others, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, under which supplemental nutrition assistance benefits allocated to the state by the federal government are distributed to eligible individuals by each county.
- 3) Provides for and sets forth, pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), requirements for the adoption, publication, review, and implementation of regulations by state agencies, as specified.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes, in state government, the OFSA, as an independent public entity not affiliated with another state agency or department.

- 2) Provides that the OFSA is independent of any supervision, direction, or control by another state agency or department, or by any officer or employee thereof, in the performance of its duties.
- 3) Provides that the administrator and chief executive officer (CEO) of the OFSA is the Director of Food Security and Affordability (Director).
- 4) Requires the Director to be a person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the OFSA, that the Director be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, and that the Director devotes full time to the duties of the position and to receive a salary as determined by law.
- 5) Provides that any vacancy occurring in the position of Director shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, as specified.
- 6) Requires the OFSA to collaborate with appropriate state agencies or departments to do all of the following:
 - a) Coordinate statewide outreach for food insecurity programs, including developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying best practices to increase enrollment in state-administered food assistance programs.
 - b) Establish and maintain a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline to make information about food assistance programs widely available to the public.
 - c) Support grant application processes related to food security for in-state providers and state agencies or departments by monitoring available grant opportunities, recommending grant applications, and assisting with the grant application process.
 - d) Coordinate communication with and among food banks and emergency food providers.
 - e) Establish best practices for food banks and emergency food providers to reduce food waste and increase the distribution of fresh produce and protein-rich foods.
 - f) Cooperate with research organizations and institutions of higher education to monitor ongoing gap analyses identifying geographic or demographic areas underserved by existing food assistance programs.
 - g) Work with state and community partners to develop and update a strategic plan to address identified gaps in food assistance coverage.
 - h) Oversee the development and implementation of public-private partnerships to address food insecurity.
 - i) Coordinate outreach about food assistance to address food insecurity during federally declared or state-declared emergencies.

- j) Coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for institutions of higher education in collaboration with the federal Office of Postsecondary Education.
 - k) Develop new initiatives, establish outreach campaigns, and identify best practices to reach seniors, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations.
 - l) Coordinate outreach efforts for individuals who are newly unemployed and may be eligible for food assistance programs.
- 7) Requires the Director to do all of the following:
- a) Administer and organize the work of the OFSA and establish any administrative subdivisions necessary for its efficient operation.
 - b) Adopt rules and procedures and prescribe duties for the efficient conduct of the business and administration of the OFSA.
 - c) Delegate authority to subordinate officers or employees deemed necessary.
 - d) Appoint and remove staff, subject to applicable civil service laws, and, within available funding, appoint or contract with professional or technical personnel without regard to civil service requirements when necessary to carry out the purposes of this bill.
 - e) Maintain suitable headquarters and other offices as necessary.
 - f) Solicit and accept grants or funds from federal, state, local, or private sources.
 - g) Serve as a liaison between the OFSA and relevant state agencies or departments, including, but not limited to, the State Department of Social Services (DSS), the State Department of Public Health (DPH), the State Department of Education (DOE), and the Department of Food and Agriculture (DFA).
 - h) Perform any other functions necessary to carry out the purposes of this bill.
- 8) Establishes the Food Security and Affordability Fund (Fund) in the State Treasury for the receipt and deposits of moneys from federal, state, local, or private sources for the purposes of implementing and administering this bill.
- 9) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the OFSA to use moneys in the Fund to implement and administer this bill.
- 10) Authorizes the Director or any collaborating state agency, pursuant to the APA, to adopt regulations necessary to implement this bill.
- 11) Includes a sunset provision for this bill of January 1, 2037, and as of that date, it is repealed.

12) Includes related Legislative findings and declarations, as specified.

Background

Author Statement. According to the author’s office, “California is the agricultural powerhouse of the nation, producing nearly half of the country’s fruits and vegetables. Yet more than 1 in 5 Californians, approximately 8.8 million people, struggle with food insecurity. Twenty-two percent of households and 27 percent of households with children lack consistent access to enough food for a healthy, active life, with even higher rates among Hispanic/Latine and Black families. Despite significant state investments in programs like CalFresh, WIC, CalWORKs, school nutrition, and emergency food assistance, fragmented administration across multiple agencies has led to uneven outreach, enrollment barriers, and inconsistent coordination. Too many eligible seniors, students, people with disabilities, and working families continue to fall through the cracks.”

Additionally, “SB 1025 establishes the OFSA as an independent public entity to bring accountability, coordination, and strategic leadership to California’s hunger response. Led by a Governor-appointed, Senate-confirmed Director, the Office will serve as a centralized hub to align state agencies, reduce inefficiencies, and ensure equitable access to food assistance programs statewide. The Office will expand outreach to increase enrollment, operate a 24-hour hunger hotline, set best practices for food banks and emergency food providers, and conduct data-driven analyses to identify geographic and demographic gaps in service delivery. The bill also creates a dedicated Food Security and Affordability Fund to leverage public and private resources in support of these efforts.”

And finally, “[f]ood insecurity is not only a moral issue; it is a public health, education, and economic stability issue. Rising food costs and a \$2.6 billion annual food budget shortfall highlight the urgency of a coordinated statewide strategy. SB 1025 ensures California takes a comprehensive, equity-centered approach to reducing hunger, strengthening emergency response, and promoting long-term food security. No Californian should have to worry about where their next meal will come from, and this bill moves us closer to making that vision a reality.”

Food Insecurity in California. According to the Senate Human Services Committee analysis of this bill:

Food insecurity is a statewide problem that affects people from all backgrounds. While California is the greatest food-producing state in the country, 22% of households and 27% of households with children faced

food insecurity in 2024, according to the California Association of Food Banks. Food insecurity disproportionately affects certain communities. According to the same California Association of Food Banks study, 35% of Black households and 31% of Latino households reported food insecurity in September 2024. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, “Black and Latino households (18%) and households with children (17%) are more likely to experience food insecurity compared to white and Asian American households (7%) and households without children (11%).”

Because of limited financial resources, those who are food insecure sometimes use cost cutting measures to stretch budgets that are harmful to their health, such as: forgoing the foods needed for special medical diets; purchasing a low-cost diet that relies on foods that are energy-dense but nutrient-poor; diluting or rationing infant formula; and making trade-offs between food and other basic necessities, like housing, utilities, and transportation. Moreover, the impacts of childhood hunger are well known. Children who live in households experiencing food insecurity are at higher risk of health, academic, behavioral, and emotional problems than those who are not.

Additionally, the Senate Human Services Committee analysis of this bill notes that:

There are several food assistance programs operated throughout the state and administered by the California Departments of Aging, California Department of Education, CDSS, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California Department of Public Health. CalFresh, California’s version of federal SNAP, provides monthly food benefits to qualified low-income individuals and families to assist with the purchase of the food they need to maintain adequate nutrition levels. With 3.2 million households (and over 5.2 million people) receiving benefits, CalFresh is the largest nutrition assistance program in California. CalFresh benefits have historically been 100 percent federally funded, but recent changes in federal law will soon require states to fund a share of that cost. Income eligibility standards and benefit levels for the program are established by the federal government, with one standard used nationally. CalFresh is administered by CDSS on the state level but applicants and participants are primarily served at the county level. For assistance, participants can call the CalFresh Benefits Helpline or reach out to their county office.

CDSS also administers other nutrition programs like the Child and Adult Care Food Program, a federally funded program that provides free meals in

facilities such as child care centers, homeless shelters, adult daycare centers and afterschool care centers, and the California Food Assistance program which provides food assistance to certain noncitizens. CDSS also partners with other departments to administer food assistance programs. For example, CDSS partners with the Department of Education to administer SUNBucks which provides \$40 per month to low-income students during the summer. Also, CDSS and the California Department of Food and Agriculture partner to support Market Match, part of a healthy food incentive program and funded by the California Nutrition Incentive Program. Market Match allows CalFresh recipients that go to participating farmers' markets receive up to \$15 in matching funds when they buy fruits and vegetables. The farmers are then reimbursed by the state to ensure they are made whole.

The California Department of Education independently administers two federally funded meal programs that target school age children, the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Both programs provide free or reduced priced healthy meals to income eligible students. Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, California became the first state to implement and fully fund a Universal Meals Program for school children grades PK-12. The program allows all students who request a meal to be able to receive free meals regardless of their federal eligibility for free or reduced priced school meals. Students may receive up to two free meals during the school day. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, approximately "3.6 million of California's 5.8 million public K-12 students are income eligible for federal free or reduced-price meals."

California Department of Public Health administers a federally funded program called the California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC provides, at no cost to participants, supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health care referrals to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five who are determined to be at nutritional risk. To be eligible for WIC, applicants must be determined by a health professional to be at nutritional risk (i.e., have certain medical-based or diet-based risk conditions). There is also a specific WIC Farmers' Market Program that allows eligible households to receive \$30 worth of WIC checks to be used at authorized farmers' markets.

The Department of Aging oversees nutrition programs that provide meals for older adults. These services are typically offered at congregate nutrition sites or through home delivered meals. Both congregate nutrition and home

delivered meals serve broad populations, with preference given to those in the greatest economic or social need. These programs are administered by Area Agencies on Aging through Community-Based Adult Services, Adult Day Services, Multi-Purpose Senior Services Programs, and other services. Federally funded Home-Delivered Nutrition Programs, like Meals on Wheels, are longstanding programs that deliver healthy meals to older adults who cannot go out and purchase food and/or prepare meals in their homes.

This bill would require the state departments listed above and other stakeholders to work together with the Office of Food Insecurity and Affordability to fulfill the mandates of the bill including coordinating outreach for food security programs and doing gaps analyses of underserved areas.

Office of Food Security and Affordability. This bill establishes the OFSA as an independent public entity not affiliated with another state agency or department, to serve as a centralized hub for coordinating California's food assistance programs. This bill tasks the OFSA with improving coordination, access, and efficiency across food assistance systems statewide. Its responsibilities include leading outreach programs, operating a 24-hour hunger hotline, supporting grant applications, coordinating with food banks and emergency providers, reducing food waste, and conducting research to identify underserved populations. OFSA must also develop strategic plans, foster public-private partnerships, and tailor outreach to vulnerable groups such as seniors, persons with disabilities, students, and the newly unemployed.

The Office of Administrative Law (OAL) is responsible for ensuring that California state agencies comply with the rulemaking procedures and standards set forth in the APA. A "regulation" is any rule, regulation, order or standard of general application or the amendment, supplement, or revision of any rule, regulation, order, or standard adopted by any state agency to implement, interpret, or make specific the law enforced or administered by it. When adopting regulations, every department, division, office, officer, bureau, board or commission in the executive branch of California state government must follow the rulemaking procedures in the APA (Government Code section 11340 et seq.) and regulations adopted by the OAL, unless expressly exempted by statute from some or all of these requirements.

This bill authorizes the Director of the OFSA, and any collaborating state agency or department, to adopt regulations necessary to implement this bill, pursuant to the APA. Additionally, this bill includes a 10-year sunset of the bill's provisions, thereby repealing the OFSA on January 1, 2037.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 1240 (McNerney, 2026) establishes the Office of Nonprofit Empowerment (ONE) with the primary responsibility of overseeing and coordinating state policy in support of California's nonprofit organizations, as specified. (Pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee)

SB 444 (Hurtado, 2025) would have declared the policy of the state is that every human being has a right to locally grown and raised, affordable, and healthy food. And would have required specified state agencies to report to the Legislature their progress on revising, adopting, or establishing those pertinent policies, as specified. (Held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee Suspense File)

AB 1961 (Wicks, 2024) would have required the Strategic Growth Council, in consultation with specified agencies, to convene the End Hunger in California Master Plan Task Force to develop strategies for ensuring access to healthy and culturally relevant food for all Californians, as specified. (Vetoed by Governor Newsom)

AB 1967 (Jackson, 2024) would have established a Food Insecurity Officer, within DSS, to coordinate and address food insecurity across state government operations, as specified. (Held on the Senate Appropriations Suspense File)

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT:

California Retired Teachers Association
Community Action Partnership of Kern Food Bank
County Welfare Directors Association
FoodLink for Tulare County
Little Hoover Commission

OPPOSITION:

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of the bill, the Little Hoover Commission writes, in part, that in its "2024 report, *Artificial Intelligence, Food Insecurity, and California's Vulnerable Populations*, the Commission found that food aid programs in California are dispersed across multiple agencies, programs, and stakeholders, creating challenges for effective coordination and oversight. As

a result, the Commission recommended that California establish a Food Security Council to coordinate and oversee the state's efforts in this area.”

Additionally, “SB 1025 would implement the Commission’s recommendation by coordinating statewide food security initiatives, improving outreach to individuals experiencing food insecurity, and supporting the organizations that provide emergency food assistance. For this reason, the Little Hoover Commission supports this bill.”

DUAL REFERRAL: Senate Human Services Committee (4-0) & Senate Governmental Organization Committee