

1077

Date of Hearing: July 1, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1077 (Gonzalez) – As Amended March 16, 2026

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to take various actions during a federal government shutdown that impacts the disbursement of CalFresh benefits.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires CDSS, during a federal government shutdown that impacts the disbursement of CalFresh benefits, to maintain a clearly marked landing page on the department's internet website to provide the public with information on how their benefits will be impacted, as specified.
- 2) Requires CDSS, in coordination with stakeholders, to establish a strategic communications plan for use during a federal government shutdown that impacts the disbursement of CalFresh benefits, as specified.
- 3) Requires CDSS to issue guidance to county human services agencies for use during a federal government shutdown that impacts the disbursement of CalFresh benefits.
- 4) Requires CDSS to develop a benefit issuance mechanism to allow the department flexibility to rapidly provide nutrition benefits on an emergency basis in response to a federal government shutdown that impacts the disbursement of CalFresh benefits.

FISCAL EFFECT:

CDSS estimates the following costs:

- 1) One-time General Fund (GF) automation costs of approximately \$400,000 to \$500,000 for changes to the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) and the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system to create a benefits issuance mechanism. CDSS indicates the system changes will require 12 months to implement.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to establish a strategic communication plan, issue guidance to counties, and maintain a landing page on the department's website during a federal government shutdown.

- 3) Future GF cost pressures during each federal government shutdown of an unknown amount but potentially in the low millions of dollars, to implement the initial notification components of the strategic communications plan, including costs for printing, mass mailers, and electronic communication charges.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Over 5 million Californians rely on SNAP benefits, known as CalFresh in California. Frequent changes at the federal level, including last year's government shutdown, have led to rapidly changing information and disruption in CalFresh benefit disbursement. Californians deserve quick and reliable information about essential benefits they rely on to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, the federal shutdown revealed that the state lacks the necessary infrastructure to issue state-funded benefits to CalFresh recipients on an emergency basis.

- 2) **Background. CalFresh.** The CalFresh program is California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an entitlement program that provides federally-funded monthly food assistance to qualifying low-income households. Costs to administer the program are shared among the federal government, the state and counties. CDSS administers approximately \$12.6 billion in federal SNAP funds annually through the CalFresh program, serving approximately 5.5 million CalFresh participants.

Federal Shutdown Impacts. During the federal government shutdown, which began October 1, 2025, after Congress failed to pass a federal budget, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service notified states that available federal funds would be insufficient to fully fund November 2025 federal SNAP benefits nationwide. On November 1, 2025, the federal government withheld SNAP benefits for the first time in the program's history. Following legal action by California and other states, food benefits were restored on November 6, 2025. However, many households experienced delays or temporary gaps in food assistance. Following the end of the shutdown, the federal government restored full SNAP funding.

The author and advocates assert this bill better prepares California for potential future shutdowns by requiring CDSS to create the infrastructure to issue state-funded benefits on an emergency basis as well as a strategic communications plan, including a public webpage, to communicate with impacted recipients, public officials, and stakeholders.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1211 (Sharp-Collins), of the current legislative session, requires CDSS, if the federal government reduces SNAP benefits, to ensure CalFresh benefits remain at least at the level in effect on January 20, 2025, and to use state funds if federal funding is insufficient, among other things. AB 1211 was held on this committee's suspense file.

AB 2072 (Solache), of the current legislative session, creates the CalFresh and WIC Contingency Fund to maintain CalFresh and California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits during a federal government shutdown or lapse in federal appropriations. AB 2072 was held on this committee's suspense file.

AB 2309 (Bains), of the current legislative session, requires CDSS to use state funds to continue issuing CalFresh benefits to existing recipients during a federal funding lapse. AB 2309 was held on this committee's suspense file.

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