

Date of Hearing: July 16, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 739 (Arreguín) – As Introduced February 21, 2025

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in addition to existing Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) duties, to inquire of the ability of each county facility that serves CalFresh participants in a declared disaster-impacted area to provide timely and adequate service.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDSS anticipates negligible costs.
- 2) County costs of an unknown, but likely minor amount to provide additional information to CDSS during a disaster. These costs would occur only during a declared disaster and only to the extent a county provides the requested information. Whether county costs, if any, are reimbursable by the state is subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

This bill requires CDSS to ask a county about the ability of impacted county facilities to provide CalFresh services during a disaster, but the bill does not require a county to respond to the inquiry. Although this bill is keyed as a state mandate by Legislative Counsel, it is unclear the bill creates a new duty for counties.

COMMENTS:

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

Like other buildings in the disaster area, the county facilities that current CalFresh and potential Disaster CalFresh recipients rely on for answers about their benefits can be damaged and county employees could be displaced. The state can step in to help provide technology and locations to help maintain service but upon request. During a disaster, taking the initiative to have all the relevant information is important to address the most pressing needs and prepare for the longer recovery process.

- 2) **Background.** CalFresh is California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides monthly food assistance to qualifying low-income households. CalFresh benefits are federally funded and the federal government establishes national income eligibility standards and benefit levels. Costs to administer the

program are shared among the federal government, the state, and counties. CalFresh food benefits are issued through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which cardholders can use at point-of-sale terminals.

D-CalFresh is California's version of the federal Disaster SNAP, which provides temporary food assistance to households impacted by a federally declared disaster. D-CalFresh offers a one-time benefit equal to the maximum monthly SNAP allotment for the household's size. If the President issues a major disaster declaration for individual assistance, state law requires CDSS and relevant county human services agencies to request to operate a federal Disaster SNAP for the regions affected by the major disaster.

Existing law requires each county human services agency to annually submit to CDSS a disaster plan, as specified, and requires CDSS to maintain updated D-CalFresh materials, including, but not limited to, state and county disaster plans, D-CalFresh applications, the D-CalFresh internet website, and a D-CalFresh outreach flyer in all required languages.

To ensure disaster victims are not required to travel through dangerous routes to apply for and receive D-CalFresh or replacement benefits, existing law requires CDSS to:

- a) If requested by an affected county, provide the county staff support necessary for out-stationed application intake locations.
- b) Maintain and make available to affected counties, free of charge, technology and equipment to support the mobile issuance of EBT cards to recipients of D-CalFresh or replacement benefits.

This bill additionally requires CDSS to ask about the ability of each impacted county facility to provide timely and adequate services.

There is no support for or opposition to this bill.

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