

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

# ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 761 (Ashby) – As Amended July 17, 2025

Policy Committee:	Higher Education	Vote:	10 - 0
	Human Services		6 - 0

Urgency: No      State Mandated Local Program: Yes      Reimbursable: Yes

## SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to update its grant delivery system to identify students eligible for CalFresh benefits. The bill also enables students to opt to share their contact information with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for the purposes of facilitating outreach regarding benefits, and requires data-sharing agreements between CDSS, California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC) campuses, and counties to support targeted CalFresh outreach efforts beginning in the 2027-28 academic year.

## FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund costs of approximately \$440,000 for the CDSS to hire two full-time permanent staff to implement the data sharing requirements of the bill.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the UC and CSU.
- 3) According to CSAC, by facilitating increased access to federal benefits for college students the bill may result in millions of dollars in additional federal funds to help higher education students pay for food costs.

## COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author's office, food insecurity impacts half of California's college students, particularly students of color, student parents, former foster youth, and first generation college students. While many college students are eligible for CalFresh benefits, fewer than 25% of eligible students actually receive benefits. By requiring the CSAC to notify students of their potential eligibility for benefits, this bill would increase access to food assistance for college students.
- 2) **Background. CalFresh.** The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the federal food assistance program providing low-income household with benefits. In California CalFresh administers the program, overseen by CDSS, with funds administered locally by county human services agencies. Eligible applicants must be a citizen or qualifying immigrant, meet the income requirement, and meet the work requirement, which specifies that individuals without dependents work or engage in approved work-related activities 80 hours per month. Recipients of the benefits use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to purchase eligible food items at authorized retailers. The United States Department of

Agriculture establishes the gross and net income requirements for eligibility. For October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025, the maximum annual gross income for a household size of three under the program is \$33,576 and the monthly allocation for one individual is \$292.

***Employment and Training Programs.*** Campuses may offer employment and training (E&T) programs as part of a local educational program that increases employability (LPIE) in accordance with federal regulations. E&T programs offered include adult basic education, career and technical education, English language acquisition, work readiness training, work experience, and apprenticeships. Participation in such programs satisfies the work portion of the CalFresh eligibility requirements for students. However, such programs must receive approval from CDSS certifying satisfaction of federal requirements. This bill requires the CSU and CCC segments, and requests the UC, to submit a list of programs at each campus for CDSS approval and requires CDSS to annually report to the Legislature through 2030 regarding program approvals and denials.

***Students Experiencing Food Insecurity.*** Research suggests that many college students mistakenly believe they do not qualify for benefits, possibly due to complex verification requirements. According to a UCLA Center for Policy Research SNAP report, 45% of food-insecure students had heard of CalFresh, but never used it, and 28% cited lack of knowledge about how to apply as a main barrier. According to the CDSS CalFresh Student Data dashboard, as of April 2025, 203,268 students were receiving CalFresh benefits. That month, 9,786 were approved and 12,673 denied. The most common eligibility factor was enrollment in an employment and training program, while the most frequent reason for denial was missing the required interview. This bill requires the higher education segments, CSAC, CDSS, and county human services agencies to enter into data-sharing agreements for purposes of identifying eligible students and requires participating campuses to engage in outreach beginning with the 2027-28 academic year.

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