



436 14th Street  
Suite 1220  
Oakland  
CA 94612

T: 510.433.1122  
F: 510.433.1132  
[www.cfpna.net](http://www.cfpna.net)

February 27, 2013

The Honorable Raul Bocanegra  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: Support for AB 191

Dear Assembly Member Bocanegra,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is pleased to support AB 191 legislation that will strengthen the connection between CalFresh and Medi-Cal. The bill would increase the likelihood that low-income Californians are provided a package of health benefits that includes CalFresh and supports overall health and well-being.

Only about half of eligible Californians participate in CalFresh, in part because of stigma, a burdensome application process, and misinformation regarding eligibility. Underutilization of CalFresh means less for all Californians – less nutrition assistance for eligible Californians, less economic activity, and less sales tax revenue for the state and local governments. With nearly 4 million Californians not receiving the nutrition assistance for which they are eligible, California loses out on nearly \$4.7 billion in additional federal CalFresh benefits each year. Those additional benefits would generate an estimated \$8.3 billion in additional economic activity each year. We simply can't afford to lose out on these valuable benefits.

AB 191 provides an opportunity to boost CalFresh participation among households with a Medi-Cal recipient and emphasize the critical role that nutrition plays in supporting overall health and well-being.

Reduced food insecurity and improved access to nutritious foods are fundamental goals of CalFresh. These objectives are also strongly linked to supporting the overall health and well-being of participants. In an effort to further the connection between nutrition and health, the link between CalFresh and other health benefits should be strengthened. Moreover, though implementation of the Affordable Care Act, millions of low-income Californians will soon be newly eligible for Medi-Cal. There is no better time

to connect low-income Californians with a comprehensive package of benefits that includes CalFresh and truly supports overall good health.

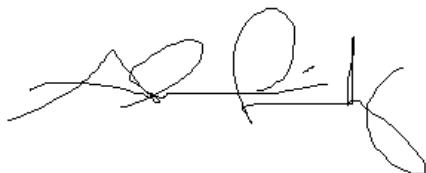
A significant number of individuals receiving Medi-Cal are unaware that their household may be eligible for CalFresh. In addition, some households with a Medi-Cal recipient may be net income eligible for CalFresh, but have a gross income above the current limit. As a result, the CalFresh gross income test is preventing otherwise eligible households with high need and high expenses, such as child care costs, from accessing CalFresh benefits. Efforts to ensure that low-income families receive a package of benefits are further by improved alignment between programs.

AB 191 would make low-income households with a Medi-Cal recipient (with income up to 200% FPL) categorically eligible for CalFresh, therefore removing this CalFresh income barrier. The gross income test would be raised from the current limit of 130% FPL to 200% FPL for categorically eligible households with a Medi-Cal recipient. The net-income test would still apply.

California has already used categorical eligibility to remove the CalFresh asset test; AB 191 would use this same tool, provided as a federal option, to raise the gross income test for households with a Medi-Cal recipient. AB 191 would bring California up to speed with 27 other states that have taken similar steps to increase access to CalFresh.

Improved alignment between CalFresh and Medi-Cal has the potential to boost CalFresh participation and increase the likelihood that low-income households have access to a package of benefits that support their overall health and well-being. For these reasons, we thank you for introducing AB 191 and look forward to working together on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Alexis Fernández  
Nutrition Policy Advocate  
California Food Policy Advocates