**SB 900 Sample Support Letter**

**SB 900 (Wiener & Arambula)** seeks to improve our state’s systems in order to break the cycle of hunger, poor health and poverty by linking low-income CalFresh households to fresh, California-grown fruits and vegetables. SB 900 would upgrade the CalFresh EBT system to integrate supplemental, dollar-for-dollar matching benefits that incentivize the purchase of California-grown fruits and vegetables. SB 900 would pilot and evaluate community initiatives that use this EBT system feature through implementation grants with local entities.

**How you can help:** We encourage organizations and individuals to use this sample letter (or write their own) in support of SB 900. Once you send in a letter of support, please share your support via social media, emails and calls as well!

**Please submit your letter of support now!**

**Letters of support should be sent to Senate Appropriations before May 18, 2018**

**Please email letters to** **taryn.smith@sen.ca.gov****;** **debra.cooper@sen.ca.gov**

**cc** **jared@cfpa.net****;** **ezigas@spur.org****;** **joe.parra@sen.ca.gov**

**Organizations: please be sure to submit your letter on letterhead.**

**Individuals: please be sure to include your mailing address in your letter.**

**Questions?** Contact Jared Call at 213.482.8200 or jared@cfpa.net

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**[Date]**

The Honorable Ricardo Lara, Chair

Appropriations Committee, California State Senate

1020 N Street, Room 2206

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Senate Bill 900 (Wiener) – SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Lara,

**[I am/Name of your organization is]** writing in support of SB 900 (Wiener), which would advance our existing state systems to fight hunger and poverty, improve health, and support California agriculture. SB 900 would enable the CalFresh EBT system to integrate dollar-for-dollar matching benefits to support purchases of California-grown fruits and vegetables, and pilot community-based initiatives to implement this upgraded EBT system at grocery stores and farmers’ markets through grants to locations across the state.

Despite being the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation in the world, California’s prosperity has left many behind. California has the nation’s highest rate of poverty, with one out of five residents living in poverty, according to the US Census Supplemental Poverty Measure.[[1]](#footnote-1) Furthermore, while California produces more fruits and vegetables than any other state in the nation, we also have shockingly high rates of hunger, with close to 40% of low-income California households unable to afford enough food.

SB 900 will link our state’s agricultural abundance with low-income Californians’ needs for healthy and affordable food. CalFresh helps over 4 million people put food on the table on an average day. Despite the reach of CalFresh, the federal benefit levels limit Californians’ ability to purchase healthy foods grown in our own state. To better reach CalFresh customers, we must progress towards integrating California fruit and vegetable benefits onto the CalFresh EBT card, which is widely accepted by food retailers statewide.

**[I/We]** support SB 900 because **[choose any of the following reasons or add your own]**

* **The proposed EBT upgrade and pilot projects build off of proven programs that provide targeted resources that help low-income households to afford a healthy diet.** Numerous studies show that the federal CalFresh benefit amount is inadequate to support the purchase of nutritious foods that are needed for a healthy diet, particularly fruits and vegetables.[[2]](#footnote-2), [[3]](#footnote-3) Efforts to provide nutrition incentives to low-income households have shown that when low-income families have more money for fruits and vegetables, they buy and eat more fruits and vegetables. Increasing consumer purchasing power for healthy, California-grown foods leads to lower food insecurity and better health outcomes.
* **SB 900 would create a scalable state system for effective programs to fight hunger and strengthen California’s economy.** Despite the success of nutrition incentives, none of California’s local program are integrated with the EBT system. The lack of a state system prevents the ability to cost-effectively scale the program across the state. SB 900 would create and test a system that could allow for eventual expansion to markets statewide that offer a variety of California-grown produce. In addition to helping those in poverty, CalFresh exerts a multiplier effect that stimulates the economy at large. This multiplier effect is strengthened when California-grown purchases are incentivized.
* **SB 900 is a “win-win-win” that fights poverty; supports health and nutrition; and boosts California’s agriculture.** SB 900 would create market-based incentives for retailers to market California-grown produce to all customers. It would ensure that farm-direct outlets like farmers’ markets are included in a state system that would work in various retail markets. Farm-direct outlets provide critical revenue to small farmers in California. The pilots would aim to increase the purchasing power of CalFresh households, while continuing to support California’s farmers and food systems.

* **Strong leadership is urgently needed to protect California children, adults and seniors from federal threats to cut the social safety net.** Congress and the Trump Administration have set clear priorities to make drastic cuts to safety net programs that mitigate poverty, including CalFresh/SNAP.

**[If you prefer, insert your own reason here.]**

Thank you for your consideration. **[I/We]** respectfully request your support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

**[Your name and title]**

**[Your organization, if applicable]**

cc: Senator Lara, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Patricia Bates, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Jim Beall, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Steven Bradford, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Jerry Hill, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Jim Nielsen, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Scott Wiener, Senate Appropriations Committee

Tracey Patterson, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)

Eli Zigas, SPUR (co-sponsor)

Joe Parra, Senate Republican Caucus

1. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf> (page 27-28) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.0096 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://news.ncsu.edu/2017/09/snap-diet-cost-2017/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)