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TAKE ACTION TODAY:

We are calling on our partners to sign on to our letter requesting the **Legislature work with the Administration to invest \$5 million in the 2017-18 Budget for a multi-county initiative to bring relief to CalFresh families impacted by unsafe water**

The budget request will be heard on [April 19, 2017](#) in the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Human Services, and may be under consideration in Senate Budget Sub 3 the following day.

Sign on Deadline: [April 7, 2017.](#)

Questions? Please contact Tracey Patterson at tracey@cpfa.net

April 7, 2017

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Budget Committee
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Pan
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Health &
Human Services
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Health &
Human Services
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for low-income households with unsafe drinking water in the 2017-18 Budget

Dear Senator Pan and Assemblymember Arambula,

The following organizations write in support of a **\$5 million initiative to provide supplemental nutrition assistance to households without safe drinking water in the 2017-18 budget**. The state's CalFresh Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system would deliver time-limited nutrition benefits to mitigate the burden of purchasing water for drinking and cooking for households without safe water. While past state investments and recent rains have brought significant improvements to the California's water crisis, there are still a number of communities in the state where a long-term solution for safe drinking water is not yet in place.

Lack of safe water disproportionately affects residents of California's disadvantaged communities. The State Water Board estimates that roughly 400 disadvantaged communities are served by public water systems that do not meet drinking water standards. While this is a statewide issue, it is felt most acutely in the Central Valley, Sierra Foothills, and Central Coast. In communities where water is chronically contaminated, residents must use bottled water for drinking and cooking. Families in poverty, including those on CalFresh, must use limited grocery dollars to buy water in addition to food, which threatens food security and poses an inequitable hardship.

There are a number of benefits to leveraging California's CalFresh EBT system to provide relief:

- EBT provides cost and time savings, operational efficiencies, and promotes accountability while stimulating local economies.
- In addition to improving access to safe water, this approach fights hunger by mitigating the need for households to expend scarce food dollars on water.
- A pilot initiative is a smart and effective short term solution to provide relief to families who wait years for long term infrastructure improvements that bring safe water.
- State funds intended to provide emergency drinking water exist, but do not always reach those in need. CalFresh has considerable reach in the impacted areas, through SNAP/CalFresh and the California Food Assistance Program for Immigrants.

While long-term actions to repair California's water infrastructure are underway, it is vital that we act now to leverage existing pathways to help low-income residents without safe water. Struggling California families cannot afford to wait for long-term solutions to our water crisis.

The undersigned organizations look forward to working with the Legislature and the Administration to bring this critical relief to households without safe water who at risk of hunger. Safe drinking water is the foundation of food security, and a vital need for the health and wellbeing of families across California. For questions or more information, please contact Tracey Patterson, Director of Legislation at California Food Policy Advocates (tracey@cfpa.net)

Sincerely,

Tracey Patterson, Director of Legislation, California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Senator Holly Mitchell, Senate Budget Chair,
Assemblymember Phil Ting, Assembly Budget Chair,
Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon,
Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de Leon,
Department of Finance,
Department of Social Services,
Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.