

# CFPA's 2015 Policy Development Survey: Summary of Results

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## Overview

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In August 2014, we surveyed the CFPA network to solicit input about the nutrition challenges affecting California communities -- and to explore solutions to those challenges. This document summarizes the survey results by topic. The complete set of survey questions is also available. [PDF](#)

We will consider the survey results, input from stakeholder interviews, and a review of our strategic plan, among other factors, as we develop our 2015 state policy priorities. In the coming months we will share our priorities in the form of a legislative agenda, an administrative advocacy agenda, and a research agenda.

### *Survey Respondents*

In total, 139 stakeholders participated in the survey. Respondents were not required to answer each question. The majority of respondents identified themselves as advocates (49%) and/or service providers (38%). Administrators, community members, community leaders, and benefit recipients also responded to the survey.

### *Nutrition Challenges and Potential Solutions*

Respondents agree that efforts aimed at increasing access to and participation in the federal nutrition programs (e.g. CalFresh, school meals) must continue. Respondents strongly support changes that would streamline program enrollment, ease the process of maintaining benefits, and alleviate the administrative burdens associated with delivering benefits.

Respondents also note the need for more resources to support nutrition programs and healthy eating. For instance, one frequent suggestion is to increase resources, including staff education and training, to improve the quality of meals served in school and early childhood education settings. Another common suggestion is to increase reimbursement rates to incentivize program improvements and to ensure that providers are adequately compensated for those improvements.

## **Food Insecurity**

### *Identifying Challenges: Food Insecurity and the Drought*

- Sixty of 86 respondents (nearly 70%) report that food insecurity has worsened in their communities since the onset of California's drought. Another twenty-five respondents believe food insecurity remains unchanged.
- Of 64 respondents, more than half report higher food costs as the primary cause of worsened food insecurity in their communities since the onset of the drought. Another 30% report increased unemployment and underemployment as the primary cause.

### *Exploring Solutions: Food Insecurity and the Drought*

Collectively, respondents have identified a host of change to mitigate the impact of the drought on food security, including

- Secure increased resources for local emergency food distribution;
- Increase outreach and communication regarding the availability of emergency food distribution;
- Increase resources for individuals and families receiving nutrition benefits, such as CalFresh, through supplemental benefit payments or fruit and vegetable vouchers;
- Invest in the procurement of additional data and research focused on the impact of the drought on food prices, food security, unemployment/underemployment, etc.;

- Focus on increasing employment opportunities, particularly for migrant workers, who are most impacted by the drought due to decreased availability of jobs in agriculture;
- Increase public awareness about the drought and the potential negative impacts on food security; and
- In the long term, implement state policy, such as water usage restrictions, and seek state investments in infrastructure to prevent water waste.

#### *Exploring Solutions: Food Insecurity Screenings in Healthcare Settings*

When asked what is needed to promote and expand food insecurity screenings in healthcare settings, respondents offer a range of recommendations, including

- Provide additional training for physicians and clinic staff on the prevalence of food insecurity and hunger, as well as the impact on overall health and well-being;
- Pursue commitments that healthcare providers will systemically integrate food insecurity screenings into current practice;
- Develop two to three standard questions that can be used by healthcare providers to identify the occurrence of food insecurity;
- Seek additional resources and funding to replicate best practices and model screening tools.
- Link food insecurity screenings with resource and referral services;
- Offer resources for clients that can be provided at the time of the food insecurity screening, such as farmers' market vouchers; and
- Increase partnerships between health care providers and local food distribution sites.

#### *Exploring Solutions: Outreach and Enrollment in Healthcare Settings*

When asked about increasing outreach and enrollment for nutrition assistance programs in healthcare settings, respondents suggest approaches such as

- Developing partnerships between healthcare providers and community-based organizations that are already involved in outreach and enrollment activities;
- Making outreach and enrollment staff regularly available within healthcare settings;
- Expanding the one-stop-shop model to provide information about public benefits and available resources (including but not limited to nutrition benefits);
- Integrating information about nutrition benefits into existing classes and workshops offered by healthcare providers;
- Improving dual enrollment opportunities between CalFresh and Medi-Cal in order to increase simultaneous enrollment, particularly if Medi-Cal enrollment is completed within a healthcare setting; and
- Developing outreach materials specific to healthcare settings.

## **Afterschool Nutrition**

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#### *Exploring Solutions*

Asked about improving the quality of afterschool meals, respondents suggest actions such as

- Increasing reimbursement rates for afterschool meals and snacks served through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP);
- Updating the nutrition standards for afterschool meals and snacks served through CACFP to more closely align with those established for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as part of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act;
- Improving infrastructure and increasing capacity (through sponsor training and similar efforts), in order to increase the provision of minimally processed, freshly prepared foods;
- Partnering with farmers, community gardens, and similar entities to increase access to local, fresh foods; and
- Separating program monitoring/compliance from technical assistance, in order to encourage sponsors and providers to request support without fear of administrative penalties.

## Early Childhood Nutrition

### Identifying Challenges

Invited to respond separately about child care **centers** and family child care **homes**, respondents identify “too much paperwork/too complicated” as the primary barrier for CACFP enrollment among both types of facilities. Full responses are shown in the table below.

Barriers to CACFP Enrollment	For child care <b>centers</b>	For child care <b>homes</b>
Lack of knowledge about the program	12	14
Too much paperwork/too complicated	18	21
Reimbursement too low to make the program worthwhile	10	3
Fear of being deemed seriously deficient	2	1
Dislike or distrust of being frequently monitored	3	7
<b>Total Respondents</b>	45	46

Respondents were asked to identify challenges associated with serving foods of increased nutritional quality in licensed child care **centers**. Responses include

- A lack of nutrition education and training for center staff;
- The need to increase the capacity of center staff to interpret and implement new standards;
- Insufficient federal funding to meet the added cost of providing more nutritious foods;
- Limited capacity to prepare more nutritious foods (e.g., inadequate cooking equipment);
- Administrative challenges related to monitoring compliance; and
- Developing standards that effectively increase the nutritional quality of foods served.

When asked to identify challenges associated with serving foods of increased nutritional quality in licensed family child care **homes**, respondents cite issues such as

- A lack of nutrition education and training for sponsors and providers;
- The need to increase sponsor and provider capacity to interpret and implement new standards;
- The higher cost of more nutritious foods, especially for small family child care homes;
- Limited capacity to prepare more nutritious foods (e.g., inadequate cooking equipment, access to sources of nutritious food);
- Administrative challenges related to monitoring and compliance; and
- Flexible or inconsistent care schedules.

### Exploring Solutions

Given the opportunity to respond separately about child care **centers** and family child care **homes**, survey respondents identify “reimbursements linked to nutrition standards” and “increased nutrition education for providers” as the most effective approaches for improving the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served to children in child care settings. Full responses are shown in the tables below.

Approaches to improve nutritional quality in child care <u>centers</u>	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective	Total Responses
Improved nutrition standards for food served to kids	20	29	6	0	0	55
Reimbursement (other than CACFP federal funding) linked to nutrition standards	27	22	6	0	0	55
Including measures of nutrition in statewide rating system of child care quality	13	27	12	2	0	54

Increased nutrition education for providers	26	24	3	1	1	55
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<b>Approaches to improve nutritional quality in child care homes</b>	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective	<b>Total Responses</b>
Improved nutrition standards for food served to kids	28	21	5	1	0	55
Reimbursement (other than CACFP federal funding) linked to nutrition standards	36	15	5	0	0	56
Including measures of nutrition in statewide rating system of child care quality	16	27	11	1	0	55
Increased nutrition education for providers	29	20	5	0	1	55

The majority of respondents strongly support statewide policy that would set minimum standards for foods served in licenses child care settings (both centers and family child care homes). Responses are shown in the table below.

<b>Level of support for minimum nutrition standards</b>	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Opposed	Strongly Opposed	Undecided	<b>Total Responses</b>
	43	13	2	0	1	4	63

### **School Meal Enrollment**

#### *Identifying Challenges*

Respondents cite the following challenges associated with applying for and implementing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP):

- The need for schools to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to assess the feasibility of implementing CEP;
- Uncertainty about the impact of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) on CEP;
- A lack of knowledge regarding CEP eligibility and implementation requirements; and
- Being ineligible for CEP due to low rates of “identified” students (driven by low CalFresh participation).

Many respondents are either unfamiliar with CEP or are unsure of the challenges given the newness of the provision.

When asked to identify the challenges associated with applying for and implementing Provision 2 (P2), respondents note the following:

- Misunderstanding about the potential benefits of P2;
- A lack of knowledge regarding eligibility and implementation requirements;
- Difficulty collecting income information from students; and
- A lack of resources to explore and pursue a new program option.

#### *Exploring Solutions*

To address the challenges associated with CEP and P2, respondents suggest

- Increasing awareness about the program options and how they work;
- Making the case that the benefits of CEP, for students and the district, far outweigh the costs of implementation;
- Offering technical assistance to schools and districts looking to implement the options;

- Increasing CalFresh enrollment to seamlessly identify students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals; and
- Decreasing the minimum rate of “identified” students required for CEP.

## **School Meal Quality & Appeal (REAL School Food)**

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### *Identifying Challenges*

Respondents were asked to identify barriers hampering increased preparation of minimally processed and freshly prepared school meals. Responses include

- A lack of infrastructure and resources, such as cooking facilities and appropriate food storage, necessary to prepare meals on site;
- The significant costs of updating and modernizing school facilities that are not up to code;
- Inadequate reimbursement to cover costs (such as labor, prep time, and training) that are associated with preparing fresher, minimally processed meals;
- Labor and benefit costs incurred by the additional staff time needed to prepare fresh, minimally processed meals (e.g., costs incurred when staff move from part- to full-time status);
- Access to fresh food, such as produce, both from a cost and geographic perspective;
- Additional training needs for staff;
- Students’ lack of receptivity to new menu items can increase food waste and cause schools to quickly revert to old menu selections;
- Resistance to change and hesitancy to change long-standing practices; and
- County health department regulations may be a real or perceived barrier.

### *Exploring Solutions*

To address challenges associated with increasing the amount of freshly prepared and minimally processed school meals offered to students, respondents recommend the following:

- Conduct a student needs assessment to better understand student preferences;
- Purchase in bulk or use commodity foods when possible in order to save resources to purchase local, fresh food directly from local and regional growers;
- Invest in school infrastructure: seek out additional funding to improve school facilities and purchase necessary kitchen equipment;
- Share best practices and effective models for change by providing staff with new training opportunities, sharing recipes, sharing procurement sources, etc.;
- Emphasize the cost-benefit ratio of fresh prepared meals and provide real-life examples of district and student benefits;
- Increase funding for school food service;
- Increase professional development and training opportunities for food service staff;
- Increase wages for food service staff;
- Engage local farmers and growers in providing fresh foods to schools;
- Review, update and modernize food safety standards; and
- Increase the amount of time allotted to meal preparation and to student meal periods.

What qualities or characteristics would make healthy school meals appealing to students? Respondents suggest the following:

- A variety of textures and colors served together;
- Food served at the appropriate temperature;
- Thoughtful marketing of meals, for example, using fun names for familiar meals;
- Increase familiarity with new foods within and outside the cafeteria, for example, by incorporating food demos into the school day
- Familiarity (e.g. maintaining familiar menu items while increasing their nutritional value);
- Attractive presentation, for example, offering a variety of salad toppings or cut fruit rather than whole fruit;

- Maximize variety/choice by serving meals buffet or family style and offering a salad bar; and
- ‘Real food’ cooked on site – the sight and smell of cooked food is more appealing.

Given a choice about how to access information about school meals (i.e., the findings from a district’s Administrative Review), survey respondents would prefer a searchable online database or other means of digital/electronic access. Full responses are shown in the table below.

Note: respondents chose up to three methods with the first choice being defined as the most useful.

<b>Method for accessing Administrative Review findings</b>	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	<b>Total Responses</b>
Searchable online database with all districts’ results	32	10	2	44
Available by email upon request	6	9	14	29
Available by mail or fax upon request	1	2	3	6
Available on school district websites	9	22	7	38
Paper copy posted at school district office	0	2	3	5
Paper copy posted to individual school sites	3	1	10	14

Similar results were recorded with respect to accessing reports about the school nutrition environment (e.g. info about food safety inspections, local wellness policies, and school meal program participation). Full responses are shown in the table below.

Note: respondents chose up to three methods with the first choice being defined as the most useful.

<b>Method for accessing school nutrition environment report</b>	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	<b>Total Responses</b>
Searchable online database with all districts’ results	31	7	6	44
Available by email upon request	5	13	10	28
Available by mail or fax upon request	0	1	3	4
Available on school district websites	11	22	6	39
Paper copy posted at school district office	0	0	4	4
Paper copy posted to individual school sites	2	2	11	15

## **School Nutrition Environment**

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### *Identifying Challenges*

Survey respondents were asked to identify the sources of food/beverages on or near school campuses that cause concern with respect to student health. In terms of the sources causing the most concern, convenience stores, fast food restaurants, and school vending machines are identified more frequently than other outlets. Of all sources and levels of concern, convenience stores are most frequently identified disconcerting with respect to student health. Full responses are shown in the table below.

Note: respondents chose up to three methods with the first choice being defined as the most concerning.

Sources of food/beverages on or near school campuses causing the most concern	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Total Responses
School vending machines	12	4	11	27
School stores	6	10	7	23
Mobile vendors	8	4	9	21
Convenience stores	17	21	4	42
Fast food restaurants	14	8	7	29
Other	3	6	13	22

### Exploring Solutions

When asked what incentives or restrictions are needed to improve the nutrition environment on and around school campuses, respondents identify the following:

- Creating “buffer zones” limiting access to less healthful food options near schools;
- Enacting regulations to limit marketing of unhealthy food to kids within a set radius of school grounds (because buffer zones for food sales wouldn’t be feasible);
- Designing and promoting school fundraising opportunities that are not based on food sales;
- Eliminating vending machines in schools;
- Establishing nutrition standards for school fundraising activities, including those conducted during sporting events and other afterschool activities; and
- Implementing closed campus policies.

## Summer Nutrition

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### Identifying Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify the primary barriers to reaching more children and youth through the federal summer meal programs. Responses include

- Children don’t gather in large groups at a single location during the summer;
- There are insufficient free activities to attract children to meal sites;
- Identifying partners with the capacity to host a summer meal site is difficult;
- Children, youth, and families are not aware of summer meal sites;
- Participants face transportation challenges, especially in rural communities or communities with limited public transportation;
- Regulations that require meals to be consumed where they are served are prohibitive;
- Rural communities content with challenges such as a lack of transportation, large distances between sites, and limited access to vendors;
- Reimbursement rates are too low to provide appealing meals;
- Limited service hours make it difficult for families and children to visit sites;
- Families’ are concerned about children traveling to a summer meal sites alone; and
- Potential participants face stigma associated with receiving free meals.

### Exploring Solutions

To improve the reach and quality of the summer meal programs and ensure that all children and youth are well nourished during the summer months, respondents suggest

- Increased flexibility with respect to how and when meals are served ;
- Increased promotion and outreach, including the use of culturally and ethnically diverse media outlets;
- Eliminating the requirement that meals be consumed on-site;
- Increasing summer programming (e.g. academic, enrichment, and recreational programming) to improve attendance at associated summer meal sites;
- Allowing (and using) mobile models to deliver summer meals to participants, especially in rural communities or communities with limited transportation options;
- Expanding the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) pilot to provide families with children additional resources for purchasing food during the summer months; and
- Increasing CalFresh benefits during the summer months for households with children.

The majority of survey respondents report that summer school and summer programming were unchanged from summer 2013 to summer 2014. Full responses are shown in the tables below.

<b>Summer School (2013 vs. 2014)</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
The availability of summer school increased	5
The availability of summer school decreased	4
The availability of summer school stayed the same	29
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>38</b>

<b>Summer Programming (2013 vs. 2014)</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
The availability of summer programming increased	7
The availability of summer programming decreased	5
The availability of summer programming stayed the same	24
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>36</b>

## CalFresh/SNAP

### *Identifying Challenges*

What are the challenges to initiating a CalFresh application, completing the application process, and/or maintaining benefits? The table below summarizes respondents' input by overarching topic.

Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client ineligibility due to CA's SSI cash-out policy</li> <li>• New rules on income guideline not being implemented properly</li> <li>• Clients experiencing improper denial of benefits</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent and unpredictable work schedules prevent eligible families from completing requirements (e.g. interviews) during traditional business hours</li> <li>• Long wait times to complete interviews</li> <li>• Long wait times over the phone</li> <li>• Language barriers</li> <li>• Frequent moves, address changes, and phone number changes make it difficult for clients to maintain benefits and maintain communication with county administrators</li> </ul>
Paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients need additional support completing paperwork requirements</li> <li>• Clients perceive paperwork burdens as outweighing potential benefits</li> <li>• Client difficulty collecting required documentation, such as proof of income</li> <li>• Related communications, such as Notices of Action, are confusing to clients</li> </ul>



Customer Service and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigma and myths surrounding program participation</li> <li>• Clients are fearful about potentially revealing immigration status</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about mixed-status household eligibility</li> <li>• Unaware of alternative application methods (e.g. online)</li> </ul>
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When asked to identify challenges that clients face in claiming **allowable deductions** for CalFresh, such as medical and dependent care deductions, respondents cite the following:

- Clients are unaware of available deductions;
- Verification rules are applied inconsistently;
- Clients have difficulty collecting necessary verifications; and
- There are too many required/requested verifications.

With respect to challenges that clients face in providing the **verifications** necessary to complete the application and/or recertification process, respondents identify the following:

- A lack of general understanding about what is required and why;
- Inconsistent notices and communication from the local administrator about what verification is pending, when it needs to be submitted, etc.;
- A lack of stable housing (changes in address) result in households not receiving notices and other verification-related communications in a timely manner;
- Households that include undocumented members may feel apprehensive about providing any verifications;
- Technological challenges related to online submission, both for the client and administrator, such as uploading and downloading documents;
- Lack of access to technology to alleviate the burden of collecting verifications, such as a computer, printer, copier, etc.;
- The list of suggested/required documentation to meet verification requirements is limited and specific documentation can be difficult to find;
- Local administrators do not permit flexibility, such as use of collateral contact, in meeting the verification requirements;
- Households may experience instability in their lives making it difficult to collect suggested or required documentation;
- Difficulty providing appropriate documentation for verifications by the deadline; and
- Over verification.

### *Exploring Solutions*

Survey respondents were asked to suggest strategies and tools that local advocates could use to enhance their working relationships with county CalFresh administrators and vice versa. Suggestions included the following:

- Schedule regular meetings to identify challenges and celebrate success;
- Establish a shared vision and shared goals;
- Conduct a local needs assessment of administrators, advocates, clients, and other key stakeholders;
- Schedule regular training opportunities to update partners on new policies and changes to local procedures and processes;
- Coordinate outreach efforts between administrators and community partners;
- Consider co-hosting events such as conferences, roundtables, and trainings;
- Appoint a community liaison or other key administrative contact, so that community partners know who to contact and for what;
- Include non- traditional partners; and
- Develop a formal feedback process to provide bi-directional input.

When asked to identify changes or actions to address barriers to initiating a CalFresh application, completing the application process, and/or maintaining benefits, respondents cite solutions such as

- Integrating the CalFresh application process with application processes for other public benefits;
- Increasing community engagement by expanding the availability of eligibility workers outside of the county welfare office;
- Updating forms and notifications to be more user friendly,
- Streamlining the verification process;
- Increasing training for eligibility workers and outreach professionals on recent policy changes and updates to the program;
- Including email and text messages as options to communication with clients

When asked to identify changes at the local and/or state level that would help ensure low-income Californians applying for health coverage simultaneously apply for CalFresh, respondents' recommendation include

- Providing training for healthcare providers who are engaged in Medi-Cal enrollment;
- Creating a joint application process;
- Including CalFresh eligibility screening and enrollment on the Covered California website;
- Ensuring that eligibility workers are trained to process both CalFresh and Medi-Cal applications;
- Establishing presumptive eligibility based on the information administrators already have about clients;
- Updating outreach contracts to allow enrollment assistors to help with a joint CalFresh and Medi-Cal application; and
- Using an "opt-out" model for CalFresh enrollment for likely eligible households.

## Water Access

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### Identifying Challenges

A majority of respondents believe students' consumption of water increased as a result of the state and federal laws requiring schools to make free drinking water available to students where school meals are served. Water stations and new water fountains are the most common strategies cited for increasing consumption. Full responses are shown in the tables below.

Has student consumption of water during meal times increased as a result of state and federal laws?		
Yes	No	Total Responses
24	14	38

If yes, what delivery strategies were used to increase student consumption? (Respondents were allowed to make multiple selections)	
Existing water fountains	6
New water fountains	10
Water stations	15
Pitchers and cups	8

### Exploring Solutions

Respondents were asked how helpful each of the following approaches would be in an effort to ensure that the current water requirements support increased consumption of water among students. Water promotion and funding for equipment are most frequently named as the most helpful strategy to support increased water consumption.

<b>What is needed to support increased water consumption?</b>	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Neutral/No Opinion	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful	<b>Total Responses</b>
Training and guidance for school staff from state and/or federal agencies	13	19	3	2	0	37
Water promotion and education for students	30	9	0	0	0	39
Funding for equipment and/or infrastructure to support water delivery	33	5	2	0	0	40
Local, state or federal policies to expand existing water requirement	14	11	8	2	0	35

The majority of respondents do not think California's current student to drinking fountain ratio (one drinking fountain for every 150 students) provides adequate access to drinking water during meal times. Full responses are shown in the table below.

<b>Is California's current student to drinking fountain ratio adequate for providing student's with access to drinking water during meal times?</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
8	31

A majority of respondents support benefits for households to purchase drinking water in areas where tap water is not safe to drink. A large majority also support additional funding for schools to provide students with drinking water in areas where tap water is not safe.

<b>Support for additional strategies to provide drinking water</b>	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	<b>Total Responses</b>
Benefits for households to purchase drinking water	25	8	7	3	2	45
Funding for schools to provide students with drinking water	40	4	1	0	1	46

How else should drinking water be provided, especially to low-income families, where tap water is unsafe? Respondents suggest providing

- Free water filling stations throughout the community;
- Bottled water in WIC benefits in communities where tap water is not potable;
- Access to a community water station in schools;
- Free personal and family water containers and access to water stations;
- Affordable water delivery in rural communities; and
- Filtration devices for schools and for low-income individuals and families.

## Conclusion

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Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey. Your feedback has already proven useful as we begin to identify our 2015 state policy priorities. In the coming months we will share those priorities in the form of a legislative agenda, an administrative advocacy agenda, and a research agenda. For updates, please subscribe to our Nutrition Action Alert. [link](#)

### Questions?

Please contact Alexis Fernández at [alexis@cfpa.net](mailto:alexis@cfpa.net)  
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