

AB 164 (Arambula): California Leads to Meet Food Needs



Opportunity

California can lead the fight against hunger. The state has long led the nation in innovative policy solutions. No child should go hungry in the state that produces most of the nation's food. No one holding down a full-time job should struggle to put food on the table. Hunger, in the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation, is unacceptable.

We must be prepared to effectively fight hunger. **CalFresh food assistance is one of the most effective tools to reduce poverty and improve health-** it fights hunger while

stimulating local economies. While CalFresh is primarily a federal program, California has a history of stepping up to fight hunger: the California Food Assistance Program for Immigrants (CFAP) successfully responded to 1996 welfare reform that stripped benefits from many lawfully-present residents. The Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement (WINS) provides additional support for working families.

Now is the time for California to be proactive. California Food Assistance should have the ability to be flexible and responsive, so we can step up if federal assistance does not fully meet California's needs.



Legislative Action

- AB 164 creates a flexible and adaptable California Food Assistance structure that can effectively respond to Californians' food needs through the state EBT system.
- AB 164 allows the state to deliver nutrition benefits when budget allocations are made to respond to federal benefit ineligibility or benefit inadequacy for specific populations, such as households without safe drinking water or other health equity concerns.

Why This Matters

Despite its wealth, California has the nation's highest rate of poverty, according to the Supplemental Poverty Measure. **Nearly 40 percent of low-income Californians lack consistent access to enough food — more than 4.1 million households. These are our neighbors, our elders, our children.** Now, more than ever, we must work to create a California where no one goes hungry. We can make a significant impact in reducing hunger and take care of our own.

We must be prepared to respond to changing needs for food assistance. We can lead when the response from the federal government is inadequate. Ending hunger is something we must – and can– do together.

Fight hunger & help California thrive: Let's be prepared to meet food needs as they arise