



April 7, 2017

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
 Chair, Budget 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

Jonathon Nelson
Policy Director
Community Water Center

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Homelessness

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Colin Bailey
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Paula James
Chair
Child Care Food Program Roundtable

Richard Konda
Executive Director
Asian Law Alliance

Suzzane Simpson
Vice President
Locally Delicious, Inc.

Stan Keasling
Chief Executive Officer
Rural Community Assistance Corporation

Individual Sign Ons

Camillia Tse, Area resident 90029

Dona Panganiban, Area resident 91767

Elsa Carrillo, Area resident 90005

Kenneth Moeller, Area resident 94806

Kristal Caballero, Area resident 94704

Olivia Sanchez, Area resident 95127

Rebecca Hoggarth, Area resident 92371

Rebecca Sheppard, Area resident 94704

Rebecca Wernis, Area resident 94704

Spencer Pritchard, Area resident 94704

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.