



# 2003 State Legislative Agenda

*California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide food policy and advocacy organization working to improve the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. In 1999, CFPA asked the Legislature to assess the severity of hunger and food insecurity at the state and local level. The results: 2.2 million adults do not have enough to eat or literally don't know where their next meal will come from, including 658,000 who experience the physical pains of hunger. Given this stark confirmation of the problem, CFPA calls upon the Legislature to take steps to end this harsh and unnecessary deprivation. Mindful of California's budget crisis, CFPA proposes the following carefully targeted, fiscally sensitive, legislative initiatives:*

## AB 231: THE SAVE MONEY, CUT HUNGER ACT

*The federal Food Stamp Program is a cost-effective tool for helping hard-working families put food on the table. As a federally funded benefits program, it provides over \$1.5 billion in food purchasing dollars to stimulate local economies throughout California. Yet, close to 2 million Californians who are eligible are not participating in the Food Stamp Program. Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg's AB 231 saves money and eliminates many barriers that keep low-income Californians from getting federally funded assistance. AB 231 takes four important steps to improve food stamps:*

### Step 1



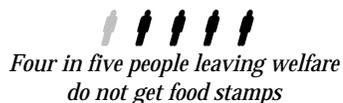
*Remove waste, attack hunger, and fight fraud responsibly:*

#### Eliminate the Finger Imaging Requirement

California is just one of a handful of states that requires all adult members of food stamp households to provide a finger image in order to get benefits. It spends millions of dollars each year to operate a Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS)—a system that detects very little fraud while deterring eligible, hungry people from getting food stamps.

**What AB 231 Would Do:** Eliminate the finger imaging system to save \$10 million each year and to remove a major hassle from the lengthy and intimidating food stamp application process. Use the cheaper and effective fraud detection tools used in over 40 states.

### Step 2



*Support the welfare-to-work transition:*

#### Establish Transitional Food Stamp Benefits

President Bush and Congress want to help people leaving welfare by providing them with 5 months of federal food stamps benefits – without any hassles or red tape. However, states need to actively choose this option in order for it to take effect.

**What AB 231 Would Do:** Require the state to establish transitional food stamps for people leaving cash assistance. This will bring an estimated \$80 million in federal benefits into California next year and provide much-needed food to families in transition.

### Step 3



*It takes an average of 5 hours at the food stamp office to get help*

#### *Help Hungry Folks Keep Their Jobs and Get Food Assistance:* **Cut Down on Food Stamp Face-to-Face Interviews**

Many working Californians can't afford to take time off from work to get the food stamps their families need. Assisting families by phone, mail or other means will help them keep their jobs and put food on the table. It will also reduce the time it takes for counties to process food stamp applications, helping county food stamp offices manage cuts in administration.

**What AB 231 Would Do:** Follow Texas' lead by expanding counties' ability to waive face-to-face interviews. Require the Department of Social Services to develop forms, procedures and alternatives that will reduce costly trips to the food stamp office for people who work or have other conditions that are incompatible with in-office visits.

### Step 4



*California is one of the few states that still forces hungry families to choose between food and their car*

#### *Make Food Stamps Work for Working Families:* **Allow Hungry Folks to Own Reliable Cars**

A key barrier to food stamp participation is our state's car rule, which can disqualify applicants if the value of their car exceeds \$4,650. For food stamps to work for working Californians, people have to be able to get to their jobs and put food on the table.

**What AB 231 Would Do** Require California to do what most other states are already doing: let low-income families keep the car they need for work without losing their eligibility for food stamps.

## Fulfill the Pupil Nutrition, Health and Achievement Act



*California should fulfill its promise to kick carbonated beverages out of elementary schools.*

#### *Increase children's access to healthy food:* **Invest in a Nutritious School Environment**

In 2001, the Legislature and Governor agreed on new nutrition standards for all food sold in elementary schools and on a ban of meal-time sodas in middle schools. The law (formerly SB19-Escutia) will take effect in January 2004, but only if the state is able to increase its reimbursement by 10 cents per school meal. Given the state's budget crisis, CFPA is working to identify a range of federal and state sources of funding so that we can fulfill the promise of the new standards.

**Action:** Increase the school meal reimbursement. Implement new nutrition standards at schools.

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