

April 9, 2013

The Honourable Mark Stone
California State Assembly, 29th District
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 94249-0029



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Re: Assembly Bill 197 – CalWORKs Vehicle Limits - Support

Dear Assemblymember Stone,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is writing to communicate our support for AB 197, which would align the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program's vehicle asset limit with current CalFresh rules, reducing a significant barrier to work and contributing to administrative efficiency.

CFPA sponsored AB 231, which was signed into law in 2003, to remove the vehicle asset limit for CalFresh. CPFA pursued AB 231 and strongly supports AB 197 because policy changes geared toward promoting work and the maintenance of assets among California's low-income households are essential to lowering the occurrence of poverty, rate of food insecurity, and hunger.

Encouraging public assistance participants to accumulate assets is a key strategy to eradicating persistent poverty. According to a January 2013 report from the New America Foundation, the "liquid asset poverty rate" (families without the savings to survive unemployment) has increased significantly since the beginning of the recession, limiting horizons and directly preventing families from seeking additional educational and training opportunities that will improve their lifelong earning potential.

California's current CalWORKs vehicle limit is a barrier to CalWORKs participation among families whose vehicle value is above the limit. These families face the choice of losing their automobile or foregoing needed and often temporary, cash assistance while they attempt to secure employment.

According to data from Los Angeles County, in 2011, very few families were determined ineligible for CalWORKs as a result of the vehicle asset limit. Yet, county workers are required to screen all applicants and recipients to verify their eligibility under the rule, which is administratively expensive and sends the wrong message about the need to accumulate assets and access to reliable transportation for the purposes of maintaining consistent work.

CFPA strongly supports AB 197 and thanks you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexis Fernández".

Alexis Fernández
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates