

SB 882 (Wiener)

CalFresh: Simpler for Seniors



Opportunity

COVID-19 pandemic conditions are increasing the already high number¹ of Californians experiencing food insecurity. This troubling trend has more acute consequences during the crisis, as food insecurity compounds poor health and economic conditions – placing low-income older adults and people with disabilities at increased risk for serious harm.

As a proven positive public health intervention and powerful economic stabilizer, CalFresh has a critical dual role to play in California's immediate and long-term COVID-19 response. Yet, only 19 percent of eligible older Californians (age 60 or over) receive CalFresh, the lowest participation rate of any state.²

The need to streamline CalFresh application processes is more urgent than ever. The number of new CalFresh applications is surging due to the economic downturn and spiking unemployment.³ With state, county, and outreach partner capacity stretched to the limit, operational efficiency is the top priority. With expanded federal authority, California has implemented several key changes to ease program access during the pandemic. With state legislative action, we can **extend the temporary improvements to CalFresh program access**, boosting the program's health and economic stimulus impacts — now and in the wake of COVID-19.



Legislative Action

SB 882 (Wiener) would: **(1)** simplify the CalFresh application for many older adults and people with disabilities; **(2)** eliminate burdensome reporting requirements that cause many households to lose food assistance, despite remaining eligible; and **(3)** ensure all applicants and participants can complete the application and recertification interview processes by phone, including the required client signature.

Simplify CalFresh Access Now | **COVID-19 is exacerbating hunger and hardship, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities. Now is the time make permanent improvements to ease access to CalFresh.**

¹ CFPA Factsheet, <https://cfpa.net/GeneralNutrition/CFPAPublications/FoodInsecurity-Factsheet-2019.pdf>

² Food Research and Action Center and AARP, available at <https://frac.org/maps/seniors/senior-snap-rates.html>

³ CFPA Chart, <https://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/CFPA-CalFreshApps-Infographic-4.16.20.pdf>