



April 16, 2019

Honorable Melissa Hurtado
Chair, Human Services Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2054 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 490 (Hurtado) CalFresh Overissuance - Support

Dear Chairperson Hurtado,

I'm writing on behalf of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) in support of Senate Bill 490 (Hurtado), which would help reduce hunger among low-income Californians who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). It will do this by exempting those household members from paying back any CalFresh overpayments received by their household as a result of administrative error.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. For over twenty-five years, we have advocated for improved access and participation in the federal nutrition programs, including CalFresh, the state's largest and most effective food assistance program.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) and AARP estimate that 9.4% of California seniors live in food insecure households.¹ The upcoming expansion of CalFresh eligibility to SSI recipients represents a critical opportunity to address the problem of senior hunger by connecting more low-income seniors and people with disabilities to federal food assistance.

CalFresh helps low-income families with members who are elderly or disabled with a food basket that is barely enough, and often less than enough, to meet basic food needs. When a family erroneously receives an overpayment of CalFresh food benefits, regardless of whether or not they were at fault for the error, they are required by state law to pay it back with cash or by

¹ FRAC and AARP, *SNAP Matters for Seniors: California Fact Sheet*, available at http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/senior_facts_CA.pdf

reducing their monthly food benefit allotment. As a result, these families, often with serious medical issues, are likely to go hungry more frequently until their overpayment is resolved.

SB 490 would reduce hunger among vulnerable Californians, and for these reasons, CFPA supports this legislation and thanks you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jared Call". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Call, Managing Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)