**SB 285 Sample Support Letter**

**SB 285 (Wiener)** seeks to break the cycle of hunger, poor health, and poverty by ensuring that all low-income Californians have efficient and equitable access to CalFresh. All eligible Californians, regardless of where they live or their life circumstances, should be able to access CalFresh by phone, online, or in person in a dignified way that supports their health and well-being. SB 285 would simplify applications for elderly/disabled households, provide better linguistic access, and better data to inform program improvements. SB 285 will increase CalFresh enrollment by setting ambitious goals and expectations for a successful enrollment of low-income Californians through county-state collaboration that makes CalFresh a central part of an integrated social safety net.

**How you can help:** We encourage you to use this sample letter or write their own in support of SB 285. After sending a letter, please share your support via social media, emails, and calls as well!

**Please submit your letter of support now!**

**Letters of support should be sent before April 15, 2019**

**Please email letters to** [**Brayden.Borcherding@sen.ca.gov**](http://Brayden.Borcherding@sen.ca.gov)**;** **jared@cfpa.net**

**or**

**submit directly through the State’s online Advocate Portal for Legislative Position Letters:**

[**https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/**](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/)

**\*Note: You will need to create an account for yourself/your organization to upload letters through the portal.**

**Organizations: please be sure to submit your letter on letterhead.**

**Individuals: please be sure to include your mailing address in your letter.**

**Questions?** Contact Jared Call at 213.482.8200 or jared@cfpa.net

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**[Date]**

The Honorable Scott Wiener

Senator, 11th Senate District

State Capitol, Room 5100

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 285 (Wiener) – CalFresh Connect**

Dear Senator Wiener,

**[I am/Name of your organization is]** writing in support of SB 285 (Wiener), which would ensure that all low-income Californians have efficient and equitable access to CalFresh—by phone, online, and in person—in a dignified way that supports their health and well-being by setting ambitious goals and expectations that make CalFresh a central part of an integrated social safety net.

Despite California’s wealth and agricultural riches, more than 4.1 million low-income households are food insecure.[[1]](#footnote-0) CalFresh, our largest nutrition and anti-poverty program, has the greatest poverty reduction impact among social service programs.[[2]](#footnote-1) However, three in ten eligible households don’t gain access to CalFresh. While California has been slowly and steadily improving, we are still among the lowest-performing states at connecting struggling households to federal food assistance.[[3]](#footnote-2) We must do better to realize the full potential of CalFresh to alleviate poverty and hunger.

This year’s expansion of CalFresh eligibility to low-income Californians receiving Social Security Income (SSI)[[4]](#footnote-3) is a pivotal opportunity to improve CalFresh enrollment, as nearly 500,000 SSI clients (seniors & people with disabilities) will become CalFresh-eligible for the first time. We must maximize the opportunity to provide long-sought food assistance to our state’s most vulnerable.

**[I/We]** support SB 285 because **[choose any of the following reasons or add your own]**

* **Access to CalFresh varies significantly across the state**, leading to major inequities. Enrollment processes are often burdensome, especially for seniors, non-English speakers, and the working poor. Regardless of where they live or their individual circumstances, all eligible Californians should have equitable access to vital food assistance needed to live healthy, productive lives.
* **California’s success in Medi-Cal expansion can be replicated in CalFresh**. Many Medi-Cal recipients are eligible for CalFresh but not enrolled, even though the same departments administer both programs.[[5]](#footnote-4) This disparity undermines the health of low-income Californians and shortchanges the potential of the safety net. An integrated safety net as envisioned in SB 285 gives people a chance to break the cycle of poverty, hunger, and poor health.
* **California has persistently lagged behind the rest of the nation when it comes to connecting low-income seniors with CalFresh**. Only 20 percent of eligible low-income seniors participate in CalFresh- the worst SNAP participation rate of any state[[6]](#footnote-5). This low rate of access does not include the SSI population that has been ineligible for CalFresh—it is a measure of our reach among seniors who are currently eligible[[7]](#footnote-6). In order to maximize the timely and pressing opportunity to enroll SSI recipients into CalFresh starting in June 2019, and to reduce stigma and improve access among all low-income seniors, it is critical that we simplify senior access to CalFresh concurrent with the reversal of SSI ‘cashout’ policy.
* **CalFresh helps our communities thrive.** Over 1.7 million Californians miss out on the nutrition benefits of CalFresh. If all those eligible were enrolled, the state would garner nearly $2 billion more in federal dollars annually, generating over $3 billion in economic activity annually.[[8]](#footnote-7)

No one should go hungry in the great state of California, and it our collective responsibility to remove long-standing barriers to CalFresh, the most powerful anti-poverty tool at our disposal.

**[If you prefer, insert your own reason here.]**

For these reasons, we strongly support SB 285 and thank you for your leadership to improve access to CalFresh.

Sincerely,

**[Your name and title]**

**[Your organization, if applicable]**

cc: Senator Hurtado, Chair, Senate Human Services Committee

Tracey Patterson, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)

Meg Davidson, San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (co-sponsor)

Blanca E. Castro-Paszinski, AARP California (co-sponsor)

Andrew Cheyne, California Association of Food Banks (co-sponsor)

1. https://cfpa.net/county-profiles/ [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. https://www.cbpp.org/blog/snap-lifts-millions-of-kids-out-of-poverty [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Reaching2015.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/Supplemental-Security-Income [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. http://transformcalfresh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ATC-DE-Opportunites-Recs-Report\_062017.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. National Council on Aging. Senior SNAP Visualization. Available at: <https://www.ncoa.org/economic-security/benefits/visualizations/senior-snap-participation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. California Department of Social Services. Who Among the Potential Eligible
are Not Receiving CalFresh? Application of Neighborhood and Community Level CalFresh Participation Measures. Available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/RSB-FanOutSlidesFnl.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. https://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/LDEP-FullReport-2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)