

March 20, 2012

The Honorable Ed Hernandez, Chair
Senate Health Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 970 (De León) Support

Dear Senator Hernandez,



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California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) writes in support of SB 970 (De León) which would take initial steps to integrate the process for applying for public programs such as CalFresh and CalWORKs with the new online health coverage application process.

CFPA is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians. We work to fulfill our mission through nutrition policy advocacy focused primarily on strengthening the federal nutrition programs, including CalFresh.

The federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires states must establish, by 2014, a seamless, "no wrong door" system for determining eligibility for and enrolling people into public health coverage programs: Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Healthcare Benefits Exchange, AIM and Basic Health Program.

SB 970 would require that the new single application and the CalHEERS IT system allow people applying for health coverage to also initiate an application for CalFresh and CalWORKs. CFPA urges the author to expand current bill language to ensure that all of the following occur when a low-income person applies for health coverage:

- Using the information they have already provided through their health coverage application, a consumer has the option to submit an online application for CalFresh with, at a minimum as required by federal law, their name, address, and signature.
- The consumer also has the option to answer additional questions online that are necessary to complete a CalFresh application.
- The consumer's CalFresh application would then be submitted to the appropriate county social services office for eligibility determination.
- The consumer would be able to book an appointment online for the required CalFresh interview by telephone (or in-person if they prefer it), with the county social services office.
- Submission of a CalFresh application must start the 30-day time clock for processing CalFresh applications.

Finally, SB 970 helps Californians and the state alike by maximizing the use of enhanced federal funds available only through 2015 for this work.

For these reasons, CFPA supports SB 970 and believes that with further development, the bill can fully seize the opportunity within health care reform to improve CalFresh participation and strengthen the health and well-being of low-income Californians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry Birnbach".

Kerry Birnbach
Nutrition Policy Advocate, California Food Policy Advocates