



March 20, 2012

Honorable Jim Beall  
Chairman, Assembly Human Services Committee  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Re: Support for AB 1640 (Mitchell)

Dear Assembly Member Beall,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is writing in support of AB 1640 (Mitchell) that would change the state's CalWORKs statute to allow for pregnant women, with no other children in the household, to become eligible for the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program basic needs grants and Medi-Cal benefits upon the verification of the pregnancy. In addition, to the extent permitted by federal law, AB 1640 would prohibit a pregnant woman from being denied or made ineligible for CalFresh benefits or from being required to participate in the CalFresh Employment and Training Program at any time after verification of pregnancy.

CFPA is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious and affordable food. One of CFPA's major goals is to increase access to the federal nutrition programs, including CalFresh. CalFresh provides low-income Californians with critical nutrition benefits aimed at supporting individuals and families during these difficult economic times. With this goal in mind, we believe that pregnant women, who have no other children in the household, should have access to CalWORKs basic needs grants, CalFresh nutrition benefits, and Medi-Cal upon verification of pregnancy.

California currently requires women to wait until the third trimester to be eligible for grants through CalWORKs. This policy not only impacts eligibility for basic cash assistance for very low-income pregnant women, increasing the likelihood of homelessness and increased stress, it also means they lack continuity in their healthcare services. Recent academic studies show that instability and stress felt by pregnant women can have long-lasting impacts on the health and well-being of infants and children. By ensuring uninterrupted supportive services, including basic cash assistance, nutrition assistance and healthcare, low-income California women are more likely to experience a healthy pregnancy.

For these reasons, CFPA supports AB 1640 and asks for your "Aye" vote.

Sincerely,

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

Alexis Fernández  
Nutrition Policy Advocate  
California Food Policy Advocate

CC: The Honorable Holly Mitchel, Members of the Assembly Human Services Committee,  
Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law & Poverty