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The Honorable Ed Hernandez, Chair

Senate Health Committee
 State Capitol, Room 2191
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1190 (Hancock)- SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hernandez,

California Food Policy Advocates is writing to indicate our support SB 1190 (Hancock). CFPA is a statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the health and well-being of low income Californians by improving their access to nutritious, affordable food. We are focused on strengthening the federal nutrition safety net to ensure families have the resources to make nourishing food affordable. The WIC Program is one of the state's best and most effective tools to improve the health of low-income children and families by providing targeted nutrition education, a nutritious food package and referrals to other social and medical services.

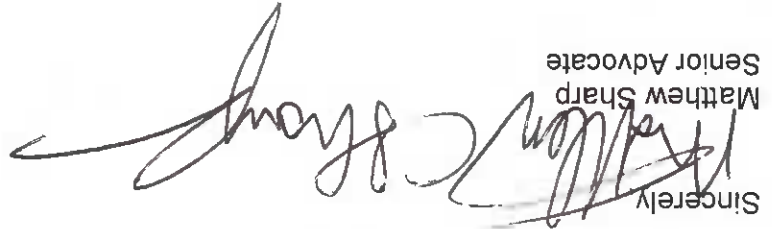
SB 1190 directs the California Department of Public Health to implement an Electronic Benefits Transfer system (EBT) for the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) by 2015. The Department would also report to the Legislature by July 1, 2013 on the feasibility of electronic benefit transfer system, the costs of providing the information, and which electronic card option the state will use for EBT.

EBT has been an important tool for transforming the CalFresh Program in recent years. The elimination of paper food coupons has reduced stigma, administrative costs and has been a valuable part of the state's rebranding of CalFresh as a nutrition program.

In the current WIC system, WIC participants use paper checks that are processed by a checker at a grocery store. The current paper checks are cumbersome and outdated for grocers, stigmatizing for participants at the check stand, and costly to operate. In California, each day over 240,000 WIC checks are issued in 650 sites, and redeemed at over 5,500 WIC-authorized grocery stores. The State Treasurer's Office processes over 4.8 million WIC checks monthly.

With WIC EBT, WIC participants would use the new electronic system to purchase healthy, WIC approved foods with an EBT card instead of multiple paper checks, a process that would be both easier for the WIC participant as well as the grocery store employees.

We support SB 1190. Please support SB 1190, and vote aye in Senate Health Committee on April 11th.

Sincerely,

 Matthew Sharp
 Senior Advocate