

CFPA-Sponsored Legislation in the 2006 State Legislative Session

California Food Policy Advocates believes that California policymakers should take a number of actions to improve nutrition in our state, including improving wages, making investments to relieve pressures on families' food budgets and making better use of federal nutrition resources. We have outlined this comprehensive approach to improving nutrition in our white paper, "Looking Ahead." We also recognize that our allies will sponsor many bills in the coming session that will also seek to improve the health and nutrition of Californians. Please visit our "Tracking Page" to follow the progress of these initiatives, along with any that we feel could cause harm. CFPA is contributing four bills to the effort to improve health and nutrition in 2006 State Legislative Session. Short summaries of these initiatives appear below. More detail and links to the resources described above can be found at www.cfpa.net.

▶ 3 Connections to Healthy Eating

AB 2205 (Evans)

Low-income families often face burdensome paperwork, red tape, and other hassles when accessing a public assistance program. For many families, these hassles recur when applying for another program or benefit. Assemblymember Noreen Evans is authoring legislation that will help connect three valuable programs together: MediCAL, Food Stamps and School Meals. Using an existing federal option, this legislation will make it easier for recipients of MediCal to enroll in food stamps. Then, building upon CFPA legislation signed by the Governor last year, children in these food stamp families will be automatically enrolled in free meals at school.

▶ Targeting and Innovation in School Meals

AB 1916 (Garcia)

All students should have access to healthy meals at school, but the legislature has a special responsibility to ensure good nutrition at schools with high percentages of low-income students. Building on this principle, this bill will require schools with very high percentages of low-income student to use a federal option that removes the paperwork and administrative hassles of enrolling in school meals, while guaranteeing school-wide access to free meals. The bill will also require California schools with more than 40% low-income students to offer a nutritious breakfast.

▶ Food Stamp Simplification

AB 3029 (Laird)

Complexity and red tape are hurting participation in the Food Stamp Program. Only 45% of eligible Californians receive food stamps. CFPA is sponsoring legislation to improve food stamp participation in three ways. First, California would, following other states, remove unnecessary paperwork by adopting a 6-month reporting system. To help working families maintain nutrition assistance without hassles, the legislation would require California to use an available federal option under which participants can renew food stamps by phone or in other ways that don't require office visits. Finally, the legislation proposes a Food Stamp "Simplification Demonstration project," which would require the state to test the impact of removing federally required red tape.

▶ Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Low-income Communities

AB 2384 (Leno)

Low-income Californians, such as food stamp recipients, face unique challenges in increasing their consumption of fruits and vegetables, as recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Two major barriers often exist: access and costs. To address these barriers, CFPA is sponsoring a two-part bill to increase the availability of healthy food by retail grocers in low-income neighborhoods by:

- ▶ Providing incentives that make the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables both a healthy choice and a smart economic choice for food stamp families with limited food budgets.
- ▶ Providing assistance (refrigerated display cases and mentoring) to retail grocers (corner stores) in low-income neighborhoods to sell fresh fruit and vegetables.