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The Honorable Eloise Gomez Reyes
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 2712 California Universal Basic Income Program

Dear Assemblymember Reyes,

California Food Policy Advocates are writing to express our support for Assembly Bill 2712, which would create the California Universal Basic Income Program. As Californians face unprecedented financial hardships due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, urgent relief is needed to guarantee that families can afford food and other basic necessities. AB 2712 would provide unconditional cash payments of \$1,000 per month to Californians 18 years and older who make less than 200 percent of the per capita median income for their county of residence.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Based on our experience with nutrition assistance programs, we know that anti-poverty initiatives are most effective when participants can spend their benefits on what they need and want. That is precisely why the monthly SNAP/CalFresh benefit has powerful health and economic stimulus effects. AB 2712 would further our mission by ensuring Californians are guaranteed a minimum income and the power to choose how their basic needs are met—based on early observations of potential effects, this policy will likely result in increased food access, health and wellness.

The concept of providing a universal basic income (UBI) has grown in popularity in recent years, and a number of studies conducted throughout the United States and California demonstrate its positive effects on individuals and communities. Currently, the City of Stockton is experimenting with a form of UBI by giving a select group of 125 residents a grant of \$500 per month for 18 months. Initial data from the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) show that recipients, by and large, spend the money on essentials like food, clothing, and utility bills. The State of Alaska gives residents a dividend of anywhere from \$300 to \$2,000 each year from the state's Permanent Fund. Research has linked the dividend to decreased property crime and poverty levels with no negative impact on the labor market.

A universal basic income of \$1,000 per month will provide eligible Californians with the financial security that many need to afford rent, pay their medical bills, and purchase nutritious groceries for their family.

Furthermore, economic stability is a social determinant of health. AB 2712 will improve health and quality of life for Californians by ensuring a basic income floor of \$1,000 per month to eliminate the stress of unexpected expenses and lift many out of poverty.

For the reasons above, California Food Policy Advocates offers our strong support for AB 2712 and urges an AYE vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabrielle Tilley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the last word.

Gabrielle Tilley, Policy Advocate