



Bill Summary

[AB 311](#) would expand access to the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to income eligible Californians of all ages, regardless of immigration status.

Existing Law

Establishes the CalFresh Program, federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. CalFresh issues monthly electronic benefits via debit cards to low-income individuals that can be used to buy most foods at participating markets and food stores. (Welfare & Institutions Code Section 18900.2)

Establishes CFAP, which is a state-funded food assistance program for California immigrants, created in response to the 1996 federal welfare, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA excludes several previously eligible immigrants from food assistance, solely due to their immigration status. (Welfare & Institutions Code Section 18930)

Background

CalFresh applicants must be U.S. citizens or lawfully present immigrants who have either lived in the country (in a qualified status) for five years, receive disability related assistance or benefits, regardless of entry date, or are children who are qualified and lawfully-admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Current CFAP applicants qualify if they have a qualified immigration status, including lawful permanent residents (also known as “green card holders”) with a five year waiting period. CFAP policies and procedures mirror CalFresh, and administrators utilize the same infrastructure to track eligibility, enrollment, and the transfer of benefits.

The 2021-22 State Budget included one-time funding of \$5 million for necessary automation and system readiness changes for the expansion of CFAP. The allocation stipulated a targeted age-based implementation but did not specify the phases for the age-based expansion.

The 2022-23 State Budget included one-time funding of \$35 million for continual automation changes and expanded CFAP access to income eligible Californians ages 55 and older, regardless of immigration status. Unfortunately, the Governor’s January Proposed Budget stated this expansion would begin in 2027, thus further delaying food aid.

Need for AB 311

Research shows that access to food assistance like CalFresh improves overall health outcomes for low income individuals and lowers health care costs over the long term. Unfortunately, California immigrants experience high levels of food insecurity as a result of racial and economic disparities and xenophobic exclusions within our State’s safety net programs.

Currently, 45% of undocumented adults and 64% of undocumented children in California are affected by food insecurity.

While CalFresh and CFAP provide a critical lifeline for millions of low income Californians, these programs unjustly exclude between 690,000 to 840,000 residents on the basis of their immigration status. Specifically, CFAP excludes undocumented immigrants, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients, Temporary Protected Status holders, and certain visa holders. This exclusion does not accurately reflect the makeup nor the needs of our immigrant communities.

Even though the 2022-23 State Budget expanded access to CFAP for California immigrants ages 55 and older, it excluded California immigrants ages 54 and younger. AB 311, along with its identical counterpart, SB 245 (Hurtado), will truly provide Food for ALL by removing the age limitation and ensure that no Californian goes hungry.

Support

Nourish California (Co-Sponsor)
California Immigrant Policy Center (Co-Sponsor)

Opposition

None on file.

For More Information

Clarissa Dominguez, Assembly Fellow
Assembly Member Miguel Santiago
916.319.2054 | Clarissa.Dominguez@asm.ca.gov