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Assembly California Legislature

Committee on Budget



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To: Members of the Legislature
From: ASM Darrell Steinberg
Date: March 8, 2004
Subject: **Co-author Request - AB 2013 - Repeal of Statewide Finger Imaging System**

The federal Food Stamp Program is an essential and cost-effective tool for helping hard-working families put food on the table. This program provides over \$1.5 billion (100% federally funded) for purchasing food—providing immediate stimulus for local economies throughout California. Studies show that each food stamp dollar generates \$1.88 in local economic activity.

Yet the United States Department of Agriculture has found that *only about half of eligible Californians* are participating in the Food Stamp Program. Red tape and bureaucracy limit participation among eligible Californians – *particularly working families, who represent 71 percent of eligible households*. One of the barriers that makes it difficult for working Californians to participate is the Statewide Finger Imaging System (SFIS). This system, which has a state-only operational cost of \$8.5 million per year, requires that all adults go to a county food stamp office to be finger imaged, which means many have to miss work to meet the requirement.

This burden on workers might seem acceptable or understandable, if SFIS was proven to be cost-effective and to have value above and beyond existing fraud prevention strategies. But that's not the case. In a January 2002 report, the California Bureau of State Audits determined that the state cannot justify the tens of millions of dollars spent on the implementation and annual operation of SFIS. A similar audit in Texas likened the use of finger imaging to detect multiple aid fraud to "using a nuclear bomb to take out an ant hill." SFIS is the wrong tool for the job. The time has come to fight fraud in a way that is cost-effective and doesn't force hungry people to miss work.

AB 2013 would do just that. It would end SFIS in California for both food stamps and CalWORKs applicants. Instead, California would use not only the same, rigorous fraud-prevention system in place in 46 other states, but also would fortify this successful approach with California's work requirement policies (which make "double-dipping" nearly impossible) and our new electronic benefits system to ensure the integrity of these important human service programs.

Please join me in this effort by co-authoring AB 2013. Together we can:

- Save the state \$8.5 million a year
- Be smart and effective at fighting fraud by using the right tools
- Help working families put food on the table.

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COAUTHOR AUTHORIZATION

Please list me as a coauthor of AB 2013 (Steinberg) to eliminate the costly and duplicative Statewide Finger Imaging System in California.

Legislator (Please print)

Legislator Signature

Please return to ASM Steinberg's office, ATTN: Kathy Dresslar, Room 6026, State Capitol or FAX to (916) 319-2109.