



Los Angeles Office
205 S. Broadway, Suite 205
Los Angeles, CA 90012

March 13, 2017

The Honorable Blanca E. Rubio
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: AB 796 (Kalra, Thurmond): Support

Dear Chair Rubio:

On behalf of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) I write to express our support for AB 796 which mandates that Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) SSI/SSP grants be at least at the Federal Poverty Level by 1/1/2019, and restores the annual "Cost-Of-Living-Adjustment" (COLA) in the program. It is an important step for the more than 1 million Californians that are blind, aged, or living with disabilities that rely on this cash assistance program and are living with dire financial uncertainty.

CFPA is a statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Throughout our more than 20 years of experience, we have worked to achieve a healthy and food secure California. Improving the adequacy of SSI/SSP benefits will help prevent hunger among SSI recipients.

In January 2009 the SSI/SSP grant of \$907 a month was worth 100.5 percent of the federal poverty level for a single individual. Since then SSP grants have been repeatedly cut and no cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) were provided. Individual SSI/SSP grants of \$895 are now less than the amount provided in 2009, but even worse, are now worth just 89 percent of the federal poverty level. In fact, the SSP portion of the grant has been cut to the minimum allowed by federal law.

Californians who receive SSI/SSP, by definition, are unable to work, and are thus unable to close the financial gap they face each month. Current grant levels are insufficient to meet the studio market rent in every county in the state. In 16 counties the studio market rent exceeds the total grant.¹ As a result more than a million Californians have been forced into poverty, becoming homeless, going hungry or facing severe physical or mental health crises.

AB 796 is a vital part of our state's response to our housing and homelessness crisis. SSI/SSP recipients have the right to live in dignity, not poverty, and we urge you to take the steps needed to make this happen this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jared Call".

Jared Call
Managing Nutrition Policy Advocate

CC: Assemblymember Kalra
Assemblymember Thurmond

¹ <http://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Due-to-State-Cuts-SSI-SSP-Grants-Lose-Ground-to-Housing-Costs-02232016.pdf>