

March 18, 2016

Senator Mike McGuire, Chair
Senate Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 5064
Sacramento, CA 95814



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RE: Support Senate Bill 947 (Pan)

Dear Senator McGuire:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports Senate Bill 947, authored by Senator Pan that would modernize the mandatory interview process for the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program by giving counties greater flexibility to use telephone and internet technology to complete the interview.

For more than 20 years, CFPA has been the state's trusted food policy advocacy organization dedicated to increasing low-income Californians' access to healthy food at home, at school, and throughout entire communities. CFPA's advocacy draws on the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements. Working as both a policy leader and supportive policy ally, CFPA continues to support policy that supports the health and wellbeing of Californians. We believe SB 947 is a step in the right direction to remove unnecessary barriers that limit CalWORKs participation and provide families across the state the vital resources they need to become self-reliant and food secure.

Current law requires a face-to-face interview, which places an unfair burden on families in rural areas and those whose parents are working for low-wages, are transit dependent, and unable to schedule time off. This law was enacted before the advent of modern tools that allow for interviews to be completed and, recorded and stored electronically in the case file. Today, these interviews can be completed telephonically, by video or electronically in ways that are more efficient without compromising the integrity of the program.

Recent policy changes have led to an increasing number of CalFresh and Medi-Cal interviews being conducted telephonically. SB 947 would give counties the option to improve alignment and streamlining of these programs for families applying for CalWORKs. In doing so, county programs will become more efficient and children and their families will be better served.

As advocates, CFPA was instrumental in removing the \$2,000 asset test for food stamp applicants and requiring a new name for the California Food Stamp Program. We also unveiled *The 411 on Phone Interviews* website to support counties waiving the face-to-face interview for food stamps. As advocates we support policy change that make it easier for low-income people to get access to resources that lift them out of poverty. CalWORKs is a proven program that provides much needed income and job training support to over one million children and adults.

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.

For these reasons, CFPA strongly supports and respectfully urges your “Aye” vote on SB 947. Thank you in advance for your support on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hector Gutierrez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hector Gutierrez
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Honorable Richard Pan, California State Senate (Author)
 Kevin Aslanian, Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (Co-Sponsor)
 Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
 Erin Horgan, County Welfare Directors Association of California (Co-Sponsor)