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March 10, 2014

Re: Assembly Bill 1614 (Stone) -SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Stone,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports AB 1614 legislation that would implement the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Consumer Protections and Empowerment Act for CalWORKs and CalFresh recipients and empower them with information necessary to make smart and timely decisions about their benefits and banking decisions.

Specifically, this bill will:

1. Conform state EBT statute with related provisions in Section 4004 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (H.R. 3630) that ensures access to one free cash aid withdrawal per month.
2. Require the next EBT contract executed by the California Department of Social Services to include a provision that requires the contractor to proactively inform recipients and retailers in the case of outages of EBT system lasting for more than an hour.
3. Provide that any fines or penalties paid by the EBT contractor associated with outages or other failures that impact CalFresh or CalWORKs recipients be used to fund work associated with improving cash access and financial empowerment of public benefit recipients.
4. Require that consumers are informed of direct deposit options and educated about the risks and opportunities associated with both EBT and direct deposit so that they can be empowered to make decisions that are best for them.
5. Ensure that future EBT contracts continue to have high quality, toll-free and online customer service that is offered in the current contract.

CFPA is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Making these necessary improvements to the EBT system ensures a better delivery of benefits.

For these reasons CFPA supports AB 1614 and thanks you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Yolanda Anguiano
Nutritional Policy Advocate