

Floor Alert

To: Members, California State Senate
From: Alexis Fernández, California Food Policy Advocates
Date: September 3, 2013
Subject: **Support AB 191 (Bocanegra) – Strengthening the Connection between CalFresh & Medi-Cal**



Opportunity

Reduced food insecurity and improved access to nutritious foods are fundamental goals of CalFresh. These objectives are also strongly linked to supporting the overall health and well-being of participants. In an effort to further the connection between nutrition and health, the link between CalFresh and other health benefits should be strengthened. Moreover, through the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, millions of low-income Californians will soon be newly eligible for Medi-Cal. There is no better time to connect low-income Californians with a comprehensive package of benefits, including CalFresh, that will truly support overall good health.

What does AB 191 do?

- ▶ **AB 191 would streamline CalFresh eligibility for Medi-Cal recipients and their families.** AB 191 would make low-income households with a Medi-Cal recipient (with gross income up to 200% FPL) categorically eligible for CalFresh, thereby removing a CalFresh income barrier. While the net income test would still apply, the gross income test would be raised from the current limit of 130% FPL to 200% FPL for categorically eligible households with a Medi-Cal recipient.
- ▶ **AB 191 would improve alignment between CalFresh and Medi-Cal.** An estimated 30 to 33 percent of Medi-Cal recipients are currently eligible for CalFresh, but 1.2 million of those Medi-Cal recipients do not participate. Improved alignment has the potential to increase CalFresh participation, boost administrative efficiency, and increase the likelihood that low-income households have access to a package of benefits that support their overall health and well-being.

Why Support AB 191?

- ▶ **AB 191 increases CalFresh participation among Medi-Cal recipients and their families.** An estimated 227,000 individuals live in households with a Medi-Cal recipient and are net income eligible for CalFresh, but have a gross income above the current limit. Because of the gross income test these otherwise eligible households with high need and high expenses, such as child care costs, cannot access CalFresh.
- ▶ **AB 191 is a fiscally responsible bill that draws down federal benefits into the state & local economies.** According to Appropriations Committee estimates, AB 191 could bring in up to \$425 - \$435 million in federal nutrition benefits to the state. Additionally, USDA estimates that every dollar in SNAP (CalFresh in California) expenditures generates \$1.79 in related economic activity.
- ▶ **AB 191 emphasizes the role that nutrition plays in supporting overall health and well-being.** CalFresh benefits guard against food insecurity, increase access to nutritious foods, and support overall health and well-being. Stronger links between complementary programs like CalFresh and Medi-Cal ensure that California families are able to thrive in good health.

Low CalFresh participation means less for all Californians – less nutrition assistance for eligible households, less economic activity, and less sales tax revenue for the state and local governments. These losses can be mitigated by eliminating unnecessary barriers to CalFresh participation.

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