

Senate Appropriations Committee Fiscal Summary
Senator Kevin de León, Chair

SB 1147 (DeSaulnier) – CalFresh: customer service standards and performance goals.

Amended: March 27, 2014

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 28, 2014

Policy Vote: Human Services 5-0

Mandate: No (see Staff Comments)

Consultant: Jolie Onodera

This bill meets the criteria for referral to the Suspense File.

Bill Summary: SB 1147 would require the Department of Social Services (DSS), in collaboration with key stakeholders, to establish and periodically revise statewide CalFresh customer service standards and performance goals. Additionally, this bill would require the DSS to develop a data management tool, as specified, to be made publicly available, updated quarterly, and utilized to measure the progress made toward achieving the established standards and goals.

Fiscal Impact:

- Unknown, potentially significant one-time and ongoing state-reimbursable costs (General Fund) in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars to the extent the established standards and goals, which are unspecified and to be determined, impose additional and extensive workload and processes on county welfare departments.
- Potentially significant ongoing costs (General Fund) to DSS to monitor and likely report on the progress toward the standards and goals, once established.
- Potentially significant automation costs to update the existing CalFresh data dashboard or potentially develop a new data management tool to accommodate additional data points to measure the established and periodically revised standards and goals.
- To the extent the statewide standards and goals are successfully pursued and met, potential future increase in CalFresh/CFAP benefit (Federal/State) and administrative costs (General Fund), to be offset in part by increased economic activity and state and local sales tax revenues.

Background: Approximately 2.1 million households in the state receive CalFresh, California's name for the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides benefits to low-income households to alleviate hunger and to improve nutrition and health by helping individuals meet their nutritional needs. The state also provides benefits through the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to about 47,000 eligible legal immigrants who are not eligible for federal nutrition assistance.

Existing law requires each county welfare department to carry out the local administrative responsibilities for the CalFresh Program, subject to the supervision of the DSS and to rules and regulations adopted by the DSS (WIC § 18902).

The DSS recently released a CalFresh data dashboard in February 2014, containing information on enrollment growth, percentage of participants concurrently receiving Medi-Cal benefits, timeliness of approval, and churn rates for 30-day and 90-day reapplications. The data dashboard also provides information on active error rates, timeliness for expedited cases and regular processing and demographic data for each county including the number of elderly participants, children under age 18, and unemployment rate. The data dashboard additionally provides statewide information as well as county-level data that are updated quarterly.

Existing federal law requires various standards to be met under the SNAP program and to be reported by states. These federal standards include an annual overall performance measure calculated for each state by the federal government, a 30-day application processing timeline, a seven-day expedited service timeline and an overall participation rate. The DSS data dashboard includes these federal performance standards.

This bill seeks to improve CalFresh participation and access, to establish statewide CalFresh customer service standards and performance goals, and to periodically monitor progress toward meeting those goals.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the DSS, in collaboration with key stakeholders, to establish statewide customer service standards and performance goals with regard to CalFresh. Additionally, this bill:

- Requires DSS to revise the standards and goals to reflect changes in CalFresh performance over time.
- Requires DSS to measure the progress made toward the execution of the standards and goals on an annual basis.
- Provides that when developing the standards and goals, to take into consideration what is achievable under current funding and the cost impact of improved program efficiency and the need for additional resource investment.
- Requires DSS in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop a data management tool that is dynamic, as specified, and if feasible and appropriate, authorizes DSS to expand upon the existing CalFresh data dashboard.
- The data management tool is to include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Data regarding multi-program enrollment, which may include, but is not limited to dual eligibility and dual participation among CalFresh and Medi-Cal recipients.
 - Data regarding CalFresh applications received through multiple channels, which may include in-person, online, and by telephone.
 - Data regarding CalFresh application and recertification outcomes, which may include but is not limited to disposition and processing times.
 - Data regarding CalFresh reapplication, which may include, but is not limited to, rate of return within 30, 60, and 90 days.
- Requires data from the management tool to be made publicly available on an ongoing basis and updated at least quarterly within 60 days following the end of each quarter for the purpose of informing the Legislature and the public about CalFresh enrollment, benefit retention, customer service, and performance.

- Requires DSS, in collaboration with key stakeholders, to identify necessary revisions to the data management tool as necessary to fulfill the standard and goals established, as specified.

Related Legislation: SB 1002 (de León) 2014 seeks to reduce churn in the CalFresh program by aligning the Medi-Cal redetermination process with the CalFresh recertification process. This bill is scheduled to be heard today by this Committee.

Staff Comments: As currently drafted, the fiscal impact of the provisions of this bill is indeterminable, and will be dependent not only the meaning of “customer service standards and performance goals” which remain undefined in the bill, but also on the level of standards and goals established by the DSS and key stakeholders, and to what degree those established standards and goals exceed the existing workload and resources available to county welfare departments that administer the CalFresh program to meet those requirements.

As the bill’s intent is to improve CalFresh participation and access, to the extent the standards and goals that are developed assist in moving toward that end will result in increased CalFresh and CFAP benefits and administrative costs. These program costs will be offset to a degree by increased economic activity through additional state and local sales tax revenues.

Recommended Amendments: Consistent with the recommendation made previously by the Senate Committee on Human Services, staff recommends a definition of “customer service standards” and “performance goals” be added to the bill for clarity.