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April 6, 2016

The Honorable Susan Bonilla
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2057 (Stone) – Support

Dear Chairwoman Bonilla:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) writes in support of AB 2057 (Stone). This bill will provide increased access to CalFresh food benefits for survivors of domestic violence when they flee situations of abuse. An already vulnerable situation should not be worsened by food insecurity.

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. For more than 20 years, we have worked to achieve a healthy and food-secure California by ensuring that eligible residents have access to essential nutrition benefits, including CalFresh and other federal nutrition programs.

As part of the power and control inherent in abusive relationships, many people experiencing abuse find they have limited or no say in their own finances. Fear regarding financial stability often determines whether they return to a person who has abused them. Concern about continued access to benefits, such as CalFresh, adds to anxieties regarding how they and their children will survive. However, maintaining access to CalFresh is hindered by problematic delays, ambiguity about the process, and rules and restrictions often impossible for survivors to manage.

AB 2057 will promote stability by enabling survivors of domestic violence to access expedited services for CalFresh and receive benefits within 3 days. Additionally, AB 2057 calls for local Health and Human Services Agencies to provide information and training on CalFresh benefits to domestic violence shelter programs. The legislation will also exempt survivors from mandatory participation in a work program as a condition of eligibility for CalFresh.

In 2014 20,438 survivors and their children received emergency shelter at domestic violence programs in California. These families were forced to leave their homes without knowing what their next steps would be. By ensuring their continued access to nutrition, we can reduce the number of survivors who return to abusive households.

AB 2057 will ease one major barrier for people leaving abusive situations by improving access to anti-hunger benefits. For this reason, CFPA is pleased to support AB 2057.

Sincerely,



Tracey Patterson
Director of Legislation
California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Honorable Mark Stone, California State Assembly (Author)
Krista Niemczyk, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (co-sponsor)
Guadalupe Montano, Women's Foundation of California – Women's Policy Institute (co-sponsor)