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SB-20 Student nutrition: eligibility for CalFresh benefits. (2021-2022)

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Senate Bill No. 20

CHAPTER 167

An act to amend Section 69519.3 of the Education Code, relating to student nutrition.

[Approved by Governor August 22, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State August 22, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 20, Dodd. Student nutrition: eligibility for CalFresh benefits.

Existing federal law provides for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, formerly the Food Stamp Program, under which supplemental nutrition assistance benefits allocated to the state by the federal government are distributed to eligible individuals by each county. Under existing law, households are eligible to receive CalFresh benefits to the extent permitted by federal law. Existing federal law provides that students who are enrolled in college or other institutions of higher education at least $\frac{1}{2}$ time are not eligible for SNAP benefits unless they meet one of several specified exemptions, including, but not limited to, an exemption for students receiving federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Existing law requires the Student Aid Commission to provide written notice to recipients of Cal Grant awards whose grants include any amount of funding that has been derived from the TANF block grant or state match, in order for the students to verify that they qualify for participation in the CalFresh program under an exemption.

This bill would additionally require the commission, to the extent that it is permitted by federal law to use information to determine a student's CalFresh eligibility and possesses the pertinent information, to provide written notice to students of their exemption and that they may be eligible for benefits under the CalFresh program. The bill would also require the commission to confer with stakeholders on at least an annual basis to implement this provision and to continuously improve the process of securing CalFresh benefits for eligible students.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 69519.3 of the Education Code is amended to read:

69519.3. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature to clarify educational policies for purposes of improving access for low-income students to the CalFresh program established pursuant to Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 18900) of Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(b) For purposes of Section 273.5(a) of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, a student shall be determined to be attending at least half-time any semester or term in which the student enrolls in at least one-half of the number of credits needed each

semester or term to graduate within four years of enrollment as a first-time freshman, or within two years of enrollment as a transfer student, unless prohibited by federal law.

(c) The commission shall notify, in writing, a recipient of a Cal Grant award whose grant includes any amount of funding that has been derived from the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grant or state match in order for the student to verify that the student qualifies for the exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules provided for in Section 273.5(b) of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(d) (1) To the extent the commission is permitted by federal law to use information to determine a student's CalFresh eligibility and possesses the pertinent information, the commission shall notify students of their exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules provided for in Section 273.5(b) of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations and their potential eligibility for CalFresh benefits.

(2) The notification provided in paragraph (1) shall be considered the verification of the student's exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules provided for in Section 273.5(b) of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as specified in the notice for purposes of qualifying for the CalFresh program.

(e) The commission shall not be required to provide more than one written notification under this section to a student who is eligible for notification under subdivision (c) or (d).

(f) The commission shall confer with stakeholders on at least an annual basis to implement this section and continuously improve the process of securing CalFresh benefits for eligible students.