



AB-1211 CalFresh: maintenance of benefit level. (2025-2026)

SHARE THIS:



Date Published: 02/21/2025 09:00 PM

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 1211

Introduced by Assembly Member Sharp-Collins

February 21, 2025

An act to add Section 18921 to, and to add and repeal Section 18921.5 of, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to CalFresh.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1211, as introduced, Sharp-Collins. CalFresh: maintenance of benefit level.

Existing federal law establishes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, under which supplemental nutrition assistance benefits allocated to the state by the federal government are distributed to eligible individuals by each county.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services to ensure that the level of CalFresh benefits remain at least at the level that was in effect on January 20, 2025, under the Thrifty Food Plan, which is a food plan designed by the United States Department of Agriculture to determine SNAP benefit amounts.

Under the bill, the above-described benefit maintenance requirement would be triggered if the federal government makes reductions to SNAP benefits that would result in the level of CalFresh benefits being lower than the threshold. If federal funding is insufficient, when combined with the nonfederal share, to maintain that level, the bill would require the department to implement these provisions using state funds subject to an appropriation.

The bill would also require the department to conduct a feasibility study on increasing the eligibility and benefits of the CalFresh program, and to prepare a one-time report containing findings from the study. The bill would require the department to submit the report by January 1, 2027, to the relevant policy committees of the Legislature and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. The bill would repeal the provisions relating to the study and report on January 1, 2031.

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

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

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) No person should go hungry in this country and especially not in California, a state that boasts the fifth largest economy in the world and where food system workers grow, pick, package, and prepare food for people around the world.
- (b) The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), referred to as CalFresh in California, is the nation's most important anti-hunger program, serving over 40 million Americans.
- (c) The average per-day SNAP benefit per person is only \$6.16.
- (d) The current benefit amount reflects a 2021 adjustment to the program's Thrifty Food Plan, which is used to establish the benefit amounts for SNAP recipients.
- (e) The Thrifty Food Plan adjustments were authorized by the United States Congress and were based on calculations by the United States Department of Agriculture, under the Biden Administration, for what it costs to buy a nutritious diet with minimal resources.
- (f) The Trump Administration and leaders of the 119th United States Congress have proposed reducing the amount of benefits provided through the Thrifty Food Plan as one of the cuts that they would pursue to fund the tax credits for the billionaire class.
- (g) California should minimize the harm that the proposal described in subdivision (f) would bring, if implemented, to low-income families and individuals who rely on the CalFresh program to meet their basic food needs.

SEC. 2. Section 18921 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

18921. (a) If the federal government makes reductions to benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would result in the level of CalFresh benefits being lower than the level of CalFresh benefits that was in effect on January 20, 2025, under the Thrifty Food Plan, the department shall ensure that the level of CalFresh benefits remain at least at that level that was in effect on January 20, 2025.

(b) If federal funding is insufficient, when combined with the nonfederal share, to maintain the level of CalFresh benefits as described in subdivision (a), the department shall implement this section using state funds subject to an appropriation made by the Legislature for the purpose of this section.

(c) For purposes of this section, "Thrifty Food Plan" means the lowest cost among the food plans designed by the United States Department of Agriculture to determine SNAP benefit amounts.

SEC. 3. Section 18921.5 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

18921.5. (a) The department shall conduct a feasibility study on increasing the eligibility and benefits of the CalFresh program.

(b) The department shall prepare a one-time report containing findings from the study described in subdivision (a). By January 1, 2027, the department shall submit the report to the relevant policy committees of the Legislature and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, in accordance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(c) In accordance with Section 10231.5 of the Government Code, this section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2031, and as of that date is repealed.