



California Association
of Food Banks

Catholic Charities
of California

Western Center on
Law and Poverty

California Family
Resource Association

Los Angeles Regional
Food Bank

California Food
Policy Advocates

San Francisco and
Marin Food Banks

December 12th, 2013

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, California 94814

Dear Governor Brown,

We the 55 undersigned state and local organizations represent the more than six million California low-income children, adults, and seniors who struggle to make ends meet, put food on the table, stay healthy, and thrive.

We thank your Administration for your support of improved access to both health coverage and nutrition assistance for all eligible Californians. Specifically, AB 191 and the 2013-2014 State Budget both take vital steps to connect the eligibility determinations for Medi-Cal and CalFresh, thereby increasing access and improving customer service. Covered California also includes some important initial connections between health coverage and nutrition, such as optional referrals from Covered California's applications to the counties for CalFresh consideration.

As the Affordable Care Act launches, we urge you to take action to help the estimated six million Californians who will be enrolled in health coverage through Medi-Cal and who will likely also qualify for nutrition assistance. National estimates from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities are that, as of January 1, 2014:

- More than 6 in 10 Medi-Cal recipients under 65 will be financially eligible for CalFresh.
- More than 9 in 10 CalFresh recipients under 65 will be financially eligible for Medi-Cal.

Clearly, implementing the Affordable Care Act to expand health coverage is the top priority, as one of the largest and most complex revolutions in health and human services for consumers and for government. At the same time, the State can strategically capitalize on this unprecedented opportunity – *and the available 90/10 federal funding for technology improvements through the end of 2015* – to improve access to vital human services like CalFresh nutrition. At a minimum, the State must ensure that the dramatic changes to health coverage do not negatively impact the delivery of these human services to people in need.

Specifically, we request your Administration take the following three steps for health and nutrition:

1. Maximize dual participation in Medi-Cal and CalFresh by all dually-eligible Californians, through integrated eligibility processes and targeted in-reach, among other strategies.
2. Establish new statewide customer service standards for CalFresh that align with those for Medi-Cal and Covered California's programs, to provide excellent, modern service to all consumers.
3. Closely monitor CalFresh's performance statewide for consumers and publicly share key indicators, such as participation and timeliness -- especially during the Affordable Care Act transition.

These proposals for consumers can be developed and implemented through the State's Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Social Services, Department of Health Care Services, and Covered California, in collaboration with the Counties, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, and the Legislature. For each of these proposals, it will be important to identify what resources are required.

The benefits of the health-nutrition connection for California consumers are compelling. First, increasing health coverage and nutrition assistance will boost the health and well-being of millions of low-income Californians, especially those facing heart disease, diabetes, and other nutrition-related illnesses. Second, significantly more federal dollars – for the health and nutrition benefits – will flow to California if participation in both increases; these dollars generate economic stimulus, increased state and local tax revenue, reduced strain on charitable services, and, most of all, greater economic security for families. Third, linking health and nutrition programs can provide families with modern, efficient customer service from our government, so they can tell their story once and get the help they need.

Finally, strengthening the health-nutrition connection is the best approach for California to boost long-lagging participation rates in CalFresh. California has taken many steps over the last decade to boost its CalFresh participation rates, including policy changes to streamline access (e.g., the reduction in reporting and expansion of telephonic signatures for applications) and outreach to hard-to-reach populations (i.e., working families, immigrants, and seniors). While the number of people receiving CalFresh assistance grew dramatically during the recession as unemployment and the need for food aid increased, California's participation rate still remained among the lowest in the nation in the most recent national survey (55% in FFY 2010, according to the USDA, compared with 75% nationally). The essential next steps for CalFresh consumers include: integration with health coverage, statewide standards for modern customer service, and a statewide performance "dashboard."

Thank you for considering this unprecedented opportunity to deliver health coverage and nutrition assistance to the estimated six million Californians who qualify for and need both supports. You may contact Kim McCoy Wade, Alliance to Transform CalFresh (kim@mccoywade.org), about these proposals.

Sincerely,

Statewide Organizations

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
Alliance to Transform CalFresh
CAPPA Children's Foundation
California Alliance for Retired Americans
California Alternative Payment Program Association (CAPPA)
California Association of Food Banks
California Center for Rural Policy
California Coverage & Health Initiatives
California Family Resource Association
California Food Policy Advocates
California Hunger Action Coalition
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Partnership
California WIC Association
Catholic Charities of California
Child Care Law Center
Children Now
Children's Defense Fund-California
Coalition of California Welfare Rights
Congress for California Seniors
The Children's Partnership
United Ways of California
Western Center on Law and Poverty

Local Organizations

211 Santa Clara County
Alameda County Community Food Bank
Alchemist Community Development Corporation (Sacramento)
Cornerstone Food Pantry (Freedom)
Feeding America San Diego
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
Hunger Advocacy Network (San Diego)
Inner Light Pantry (Santa Cruz)
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Korean Community Center of the East Bay
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Low Income Self-Help Center of San Jose

Nutrition for Los Angeles Families
Orange County Food Bank
Redwood Empire Food Bank (Santa Rosa)
River City Food Bank (Sacramento)
Sacramento Housing Alliance
Sacramento Hunger Coalition
Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness
Saint Mary's Center (Oakland)
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Francisco and Marin Food Banks
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (San Jose)
Silicon Valley Independent Living Center
Street Level Health Project (Oakland)
United Way Silicon Valley
Walnut Avenue Women's Center (Santa Cruz)

cc:

CHHS Secretary Diana S. Dooley
CDSS Director Will Lightbourne
DHCS Director Toby Douglas
Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee
Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg
Speaker of the Assembly John A. Pérez
CWDA Executive Director Frank Mecca