

**We OPPOSE the Governor's January 2011 Proposal to Realign CalFresh:
More State Responsibility, not Less, Needed to Transform CalFresh**

August 1, 2011

CalFresh helps ensure that more than 3.7 million Californians have adequate and consistent access to the food they need to live healthy, dignified lives. CalFresh is our State's version of the federal nutrition program formerly known as "food stamps." It provides a monthly benefit for food purchases through an electronic benefit card; the average monthly benefit is \$146.52 per person, all from federal funds. California is one of 10 states where the State and counties share administration of the federal program.

Problem: For many years, California has had one of the worst state participation rates in the nation (approximately 50%). Even as the recession led to more than 1 million new people receiving help from CalFresh, more than 3.6 million people in need still are *not* receiving a total of \$4.9 billion in federal benefits for their food purchases. This low rate of participation also means that California is losing \$8.7 billion in economic activity that CalFresh usage could generate for our State and, in particular, our food and agriculture sectors. **A major transformation of CalFresh is needed so it can effectively deliver federal nutrition benefits to all eligible people in California, regardless of where they live.**

Solution: More State involvement with CalFresh, not less, is needed to dramatically boost California's participation rate, bring California in line with other states' best practices, stimulate additional food spending in our economy, and, most of all, help all Californians in need receive their federal benefits for food. The State and counties must continue to strengthen their work together to maximize federal options, replicate best practices, and streamline operations -- so that every qualified Californian has access to CalFresh, no matter where they live.

By contrast, the Governor's January 2011 proposal to realign CalFresh, increase local responsibilities, and further diminish the State role will make it significantly harder to transform CalFresh.

- CalFresh meets *neither* of the two criteria for greater local control outlined by the non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO): 1) "state wide uniformity is not necessary" and 2) "local control can lead to more efficient delivery of service."
- State health care implementation poses a major opportunity to align and simplify programs serving families, but further local control of CalFresh would complicate that connection.
- What's more, the State's role is already so modest that further reduction in responsibility runs the risk of failing to fulfill the minimum federal legal obligations for effective administration.

Only a unified, statewide approach, working with the 58 counties and other stakeholders, will achieve maximum results for all Californians, minimize redundant administrative work, and ensure legal compliance.

Therefore, we urge the State to:

1) Drop the proposal (Realignment Phase 2) to further shift CalFresh administration from the State to the counties, and

2) Strengthen, not diminish, its leadership of CalFresh in partnership with the counties, in order to best serve all Californians.

Signed by:

California Association of Food Banks
California Family Resource Association

California Food Policy Advocates
Catholic Charities of California United