

1 [Supporting California State Senate Bill No. 882 (Wiener) - CalFresh]

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3 **Resolution supporting California State Senate Bill No. 882, authored by State Senator**
4 **Scott Wiener, to reduce the prevalence of food insecurity and poverty among older**
5 **adults and people with disabilities in the City and County of San Francisco by**
6 **increasing participation in the CalFresh Program.**

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8 WHEREAS, COVID-19 pandemic conditions are increasing the already high number of
9 San Francisco residents experiencing food insecurity; this troubling trend has more acute
10 consequences during the crisis, as food insecurity compounds poor health and economic
11 conditions — placing low-income older adults and people with disabilities at increased risk for
12 serious harm; and

13 WHEREAS, The need to streamline CalFresh application processes is more urgent
14 than ever as the number of new CalFresh applications surges due to the economic downturn
15 and spiking unemployment; with state, county, and outreach partner capacity stretched to the
16 limit, operational efficiency is the top priority; and

17 WHEREAS, Expanded federal authority during the crisis has allowed California to
18 implement several key changes to ease program access during the pandemic; with state
19 legislative action, we can extend certain temporary improvements to CalFresh program
20 access, boosting the program's health and economic stimulus impact; and

21 WHEREAS, CalFresh has a critical dual role to play in California's immediate and long-
22 term COVID-19 response as a proven positive public health intervention and powerful
23 economic stabilizer; yet, according to the most recent data, only 19 percent of eligible older
24 Californians (age 60 or over) receive CalFresh, the lowest participation rate of any state; and

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1 WHEREAS, The CalFresh Program is the first line of defense against food insecurity in
2 San Francisco County by providing supplemental benefits for eligible low-income households
3 to purchase nutritious foods at authorized retailers including supermarkets, neighborhood
4 grocery stores, and farmers' markets; and

5 WHEREAS, Community-based food programs alone cannot eliminate persistent
6 hunger due to limited capacity compared to existing need; nationwide, federal nutrition
7 programs provide 19 of every 20 meals needed by low-income people; and

8 WHEREAS, The most recent USDA analysis available estimated California's CalFresh
9 participation rate at 72 percent, ranking 47th out of 50 states, and well below the national
10 average of 85 percent; and

11 WHEREAS, The most recent analysis available from the national Food Research and
12 Action Center estimated California's CalFresh participation rate among older adults age 60 or
13 over at 19 percent, ranking last out of all states, and well below the national average of 42
14 percent; and

15 WHEREAS, Program data from San Francisco's Department of Aging and Adult
16 Services indicates that 78 percent of adults with disabilities seeking home delivered and
17 congregate meal services are food insecure; and

18 WHEREAS, The most recent analysis from the California Department of Social
19 Services indicates San Francisco County ranks in the bottom third of California's 58 counties,
20 with a CalFresh participation rate of 56 percent, compared to the statewide rate of 71 percent,
21 and eight counties at or above the national average of 85 percent; and

22 WHEREAS, 73 percent of CalFresh participants are families with children and nearly
23 46 percent are working families; and

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1 WHEREAS, Studies show that adults who received CalFresh as a child have higher
2 high school completion rates and lower rates of stunted growth, obesity and heart disease
3 than non-CalFresh counterparts; and

4 WHEREAS, Recent studies show that access to SNAP significantly improved low-
5 income seniors' chances of living independently in the community and avoiding
6 hospitalization, including reduced likelihood of subsequent nursing home use and reduced
7 Medicare and Medicaid costs; and

8 WHEREAS, The estimated additional federally-funded benefits received if participation
9 reached 100 percent of income eligible individuals in San Francisco County is \$42.7 million;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, The estimated annual increase in economic activity if CalFresh reached
12 100 percent of eligible households in San Francisco County is \$76.3 million; and

13 WHEREAS, CalFresh stimulates local economic activity and creates jobs in the food
14 agricultural, retail, and distribution sectors; a 2010 study by the USDA found that for every \$1
15 billion of added SNAP funding, between 8,900 and 17,000 jobs were created; and

16 WHEREAS, The County of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors have acknowledged
17 that "food is a basic human right and essential for human health" and thus created the Food
18 Security Task Force in 2013 (Resolution No. 447-13) with the goal of ending hunger by 2020;
19 now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco supports State Senate Bill
21 No. 882 (Wiener) as written, which would, if enacted: simplify the CalFresh application for
22 many older adults and people with disabilities; eliminate burdensome reporting requirements
23 that cause many households to lose food assistance, despite remaining eligible; and ensure
24 all applicants and participants can complete the application and recertification interview
25 processes by phone, including the required client signature.