



California Hunger Action Coalition

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2004 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Introduction

The California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC) is a broad-based membership organization of emergency food providers, consumers, and anti-hunger advocates from throughout the state. United in the belief that access to adequate, nutritious and safe food is a fundamental human right, the coalition advocates for freedom from hunger for all Californians.

Far too many California families struggle to put food on the table. For instance, more than 2.2 million low-income adults cannot always afford enough food. Hungry children and adults suffer from poor physical and emotional health and can have increased difficulties in school and the workplace. Helping low-income families meet their food needs is not only the best way to ensure that all Californians can participate in the recovering economy, but is also a moral obligation of the state and its lawmakers.

Legislative Priorities

- **Californians facing hard times should be able to access the federally funded Food Stamp Program.**

The federally funded Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Food stamps help low-income families stretch their budgets, so parents don't have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table. Along with providing essential food assistance to families, the program brings hundreds of millions of federal dollars into our state's economy. This money provides new income for grocers, farmers and other food industry members and helps to boost our economy. In fact, every dollar in food stamp benefits spent in the state results in \$1.84 in benefits to the economy.

- **End California's costly and ineffective Finger Imaging Requirement**

CHAC supports AB 2013, legislation that will eliminate the Finger Imaging requirement for the Food Stamp Program. California is one of just a handful of states that require every adult member of food stamp households to get finger printed in order to receive benefits. The state spends millions of dollars each year to operate the Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) – a system that detects very little fraud while deterring eligible people in need of food assistance from receiving food stamps. The finger imaging requirement adds one more layer of bureaucracy to an already complex application process, making it more difficult for working families to get the help they need.

Contact: Kami Kruckenberg, California Food Policy Advocates, 415-777-4422 ext. 107

Provide nutrition support for families in recovery

CHAC supports AB 1796, legislation to restore food stamp benefits to families with an adult member that has a drug-related felony. In California, people with prior drug felony convictions are subject to a lifetime ban on receiving food stamps. This ban unfairly punishes parents and individuals who have served their time, are looking to start over and need food assistance. Denying food stamp benefits to parents with prior drug felony convictions hinders their ability to provide and care for their children. Thirty-one states have restored partial or full benefits to this vulnerable population. Access to nutritious food through the Food Stamp Program helps with the recovery process, prevents recidivism and supports parents in rebuilding their relationships with their children. **Contact:** Ana Hicks, California Hunger Action Coalition, 510-834-3663 ext. 338

- **California's children shouldn't start the school day hungry.**

- **Require breakfast at all of California's public schools**

CHAC supports AB 2200, legislation that will require all schools to serve breakfast. Currently only 38 percent of California students who eat school lunch also participate in the school breakfast program. Providing school breakfast to low-income students through the federally funded National School Breakfast Program prevents the distraction of an empty stomach and helps students to succeed in school. Twenty-seven other states have laws requiring all or certain schools to participate in the School Breakfast Program. **Contact:** George Manalo-LeClair, California Food Policy Advocates, 415-777-4422 ext. 103

- **The state of California must protect all of people from going hungry.**

- **Preserve essential funding for programs that help low-income families put food on the table**

CHAC **opposes** the governor's budget proposals to cut crucial programs that prevent hunger in California. CHAC is asking the following of our state leaders:

- **Don't repeal** AB 231, which made the Food Stamp Program more accessible for working families by allowing people to keep their reliable cars and receive food stamps as well as providing alternatives to the face to face interview.
- **Don't eliminate** transitional food stamp benefits for families moving from welfare to work.
- **Don't reduce and block grant** funding for the California Food Assistance Program, which provides essential food assistance to immigrants.
- **Don't reduce** funding for senior nutrition programs, such as the Brown Bag program.
- **Don't reduce** cash assistance grants for needy families with children.

CHAC urges the legislature to protect these vital nutrition programs. The governor's proposals will make it more difficult for families to put food on the table, resulting in an increase in hunger in California. **Contact:** Ana Hicks, California Hunger Action Coalition, 510-834-3663 ext. 338

For more information about the California Hunger Action Coalition and hunger in California, log onto www.hungeraction.net or contact:

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CHAC members (partial list): Alameda County Community Food Bank, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Bread for the World, California Association of Food Banks, California Food Policy Advocates, California Nevada Community Action Coalition, Center for Community and Family Services, Food for People, Food Bank of Monterey County, Fresno Metro Ministry, LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, LA Community Action Network, Orange County Community Development Council, Sacramento Hunger Commission, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz/San Benito Counties, St. Anthony Foundation of San Francisco, and the Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties