



## **Senate Bill 904**

# **High Unemployment Hunger Relief Act of 2016**

**(As Introduced 1/21/2016)**

### **SUMMARY**

SB 904 requires California counties and regions to accept extended CalFresh federal funds in areas of declared job shortages.

### **ISSUE**

Federal law provides food aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California. CalFresh supplements family food budgets by providing an average of \$300 a month per household. The aid is limited for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) to just three months out of a three-year period, unless they are employed for at least 20 hours a week or participate in the CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) program.

The Federal government may temporarily waive the 3-month rule if, for example, a region is declared a Labor Surplus Area. Under current California law, counties may choose not to accept the waiver, thereby refusing federal money for food assistance. Assistance should not be refused when the health and economic realities of CalFresh participants are desperate.

Over 80 percent of the people subject to the 3-month limit live with incomes below half of the poverty line. There is little evidence that participating in CalFresh discourages individuals from working when jobs are available. Instead, participants face limited job prospects since they are more likely to lack basic job skills like reading and math comprehension. This bill will help prevent hunger and hardship among Californians when jobs are scarce.

Additionally, California ranks second to last in the nation in SNAP participation rates. Considering the existing barriers in participation, requiring all counties and sub-counties to accept ABAWD waivers will easily remove another barrier in delivering food assistance to eligible individuals.

### **SB 904 (HERTZBERG)**

SB 904 requires all areas eligible for a CalFresh ABAWD waiver to accept it, ensuring that individuals receive the benefits they qualify for and need.

### **SUPPORT**

Western Center on Law and Poverty (sponsor)  
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (sponsor)  
Alameda County Food Bank  
California Association of Food Banks  
Courage Campaign  
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
Hunger Action Los Angeles  
St. Anthony Foundation

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