



SPUR

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May 19, 2021

The Honorable Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 94249-0002

RE: Assembly Bill 368 (Gomez Reyes) as Amended – Support

Dear Chair Gonzalez:

On behalf of SPUR, I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 368 (Gonzalez Reyes). This legislation would establish a two-year "Food Prescription" pilot in partnership with Medi-Cal managed care plans in three California counties. The legislation aims to directly address racial health disparities, chronic disease, healthcare costs, and healthcare utilization among Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

Food Prescriptions like those proposed in AB 368 are a way to prevent, reverse, and manage common chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. These are the very conditions that put an individual at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infections and disproportionately affect communities of color.¹ The pandemic has exacerbated health disparities among communities of color, illuminating the urgent need to build resiliency among vulnerable populations, especially those with underlying medical conditions.

As we noted in our report *Healthy Food Within Reach*, what we eat has a strong influence on our likelihood of developing diet-related diseases such as diabetes.² These health conditions don't just impact individuals lives but burden the health care system through increased hospitalizations and treatment costs. By looking upstream and investing these one-time funds in prevention California can improve patient outcomes, reduce health care costs and build the system to lock in these benefits over the long-term.

For these reasons SPUR supports AB 368 and urges your 'aye' vote.

Sincerely,

Katie Ettman

Food and Agriculture Senior Policy Associate

cc: Shannon Flores, Assemblyman Eloise Gomez-Reyes
Rachel Richman, Office of Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan

¹ COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity. Centers for Disease Control. April 2, 2021.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-raceethnicity.html>

² SPUR, *Healthy Food Within Reach*, February 2015: www.spur.org/foodaccess