

April 11, 2023

The Honorable Corey Jackson
Chair of Assembly Human Services Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 311 (Santiago): Food for All - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Jackson:

On behalf of SPUR, we are writing in strong support of AB 311 (Santiago) “Food for All”, which would expand the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to provide vital food assistance to income-eligible Californians who are currently ineligible due to their immigration status.

California immigrants experience high levels of food insecurity as a result of racial and economic disparities that exist within our state’s safety net programs. The COVID-19 pandemic and rising cost of food due to inflation have worsened hardships across the state, particularly among low-income undocumented immigrants.

Children in families with undocumented immigrant members are three to four times more likely to struggle to meet their basic needs than children in non-immigrant households¹. In fact, recent studies indicate that 45 percent of undocumented Californians and 64 percent of undocumented children are currently affected by food insecurity.² While CalFresh and CFAP provide a critical lifeline for millions of Californians with low income, these programs exclude between 690,000 to 840,000 Californians on the basis of their immigration status.

As we noted in our report *Healthy Food Within Reach*, maximizing enrollment in the state’s food assistance programs is key to improving healthy food access³. California should maximize CFAP and improve food security by enrolling as many eligible individuals as possible.

In order to effectively address increasing food insecurity, reduce poverty, and support an equitable recovery from the impact of COVID-19, it is critical that California eliminate immigrant exclusions within CFAP and bring equity to our state’s food safety net. California has a longstanding history of enacting inclusive policies and has the power to end the exclusion of immigrants from our food assistance programs. Until all California residents can access food benefits, our institutions will not fully reflect the state’s values of equity and inclusion.

For these reasons, we strongly support AB 311 and respectfully request your support.

Sincerely,



Eli Zigas
Food and Agriculture Policy Director



Katie Ettman
Food and Agriculture Policy Manager

¹ https://childrenspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/AChildIsaChild_Children-in-Immigrant-Families-2022-FINAL.pdf

² <https://nourishca.org/food4all-briefs/>

³ https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/SPUR_Healthy_Food_Within_Reach_Report.pdf