

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS SHEILA KUEHL
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Reduce Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Poverty by Increasing CalFresh

Participation

The health and economic costs of food insecurity among adults, children and seniors in Los Angeles County is well documented. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has been utilizing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food security questionnaire to assess the level of food insecurity among residents as part of the Los Angeles County Health Survey. The most recent data available reflect that 561,000 households in the County experienced food insecurity in 2015, which reflects no significant statistical change since 2011.

The CalFresh Program constitutes the first line of defense against food insecurity in Los Angeles County by providing supplemental benefits for eligible low-income households to purchase nutritious foods at authorized retailers including supermarkets, neighborhood grocery stores, and farmers markets. The most recent USDA analysis estimated California's CalFresh participation rate at 66% Statewide. California ranks 48th out of 50 states. The most recent analysis from the CA Department of Social

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Services indicates that Los Angeles ranks in the bottom third of California's 58 counties, with a CalFresh participation rate of 66.3%, compared to the Statewide average of 69.7% and neighboring San Bernardino County at 92.7%. Of the 66.3% who participate, 74% of CalFresh participants are families with children and nearly 50% are working families.

Studies show that adults who received CalFresh as children, have greater high school completion rates and lower rates of stunted growth, obesity and heart disease than non-CalFresh counterparts.

Robust participation in CalFresh also stimulates local economic activity and increases jobs in the food, agricultural, retail and distribution sectors.

It is estimated that Los Angeles County would receive \$1.8 billion in additional federal funding if participation of income eligible individuals in the County reached 100%. The increased participation is also estimated to result in a \$2.1 billion growth in economic activity within the County.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Social Services to:

- 1) Create a specialized unit with existing staffing and resources, led by qualified senior staff accountable to the Board of Supervisors to conduct a thorough review of current business processes and develop opportunities and efficiencies for improvements towards increased enrollment, retention, and reporting including but not limited to:
 - Client service and performance standards for the CalFresh Customer Service Call Center;

- Client and community outreach partner service standards for the *Your Benefits Now* website enrollment, verification, and case management functionality;
- 2) Based on the results of the business process review, adopt a goal of increasing CalFresh participation within Los Angeles County by no less than 20 percent in two years from the current 66.3%, as measured by the CA Department of Social Services;
 - 3) Submit monthly progress and accountability reports to the Board of Supervisors on all of the objectives listed herein.

S: GHH/CalFresh Motion