

Partnering to Address Food Insecurity During CalFresh Awareness Month

Public assistance programs are critical and help provide stability to millions of Los Angeles County (County) residents. The CalFresh Program, which is federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is supposed to act as a safety net against hunger for the County’s low-income household and families.

A 2022 study by the Public Exchange at the USC Dornsife College states that more than 800,000, or 1 in 4, of all Angelenos experienced food insecurity between July 2021 to July 2022, an increase of 24 percent from 17 percent the previous year. This is a serious public health concern, as individuals and households experiencing food insecurity face barriers to consuming healthy food.

One of the highest priorities of the Board of Supervisors, Departments of Public Social Services (DPSS) and Public Health (DPH), and the many dedicated local Community and Faith-based partners, is to collaborate to address food insecurity in the nation’s second largest county by spreading awareness about CalFresh nutrition benefits and increasing enrollment in the program.

MOTION

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Consistent access to food is the foundation of a strong and healthy community. Therefore, an ongoing strategy to publicize the benefits of CalFresh nutrition assistance is critical to ensuring the health and well-being of thousands of low-income individuals and families across the County.

On January 31, 2023, in collaboration with the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), DPSS launched a grant partnership with 25 community-based organizations to conduct robust and culturally appropriate outreach to the target areas with the highest need to encourage enrollment in CalFresh. The collaboration is in strong alignment with the L.A. County Food Equity Roundtable's strategies to address disparities in underserved communities by implementing solutions to achieve food equity and nutrition security for the most vulnerable residents of the County. It also aligns with findings from a 2022 community-led report published by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council that emphasizes CalFresh as an economic stimulant in order to reduce community-level stigma towards the program. Citing Nourish California, the report highlights that if every qualified individual enrolled in and spent their CalFresh benefits, the County would receive \$541 million in federal funds which would generate an additional \$833.1 million in our local food economy.

These efforts are a continuation of the launch of the May 2011 CalFresh Awareness Month (CFAM) collaboration with DPH, community and faith-based organizations, the 88 Cities of the County, college campuses, local school districts and farmers' markets, on a variety of community events and strategies, to heighten public awareness and remove barriers that discourage eligible residents from applying.

Twelve years later, the annual CFAM partnership's community outreach, media

outreach, and social media strategies, serve today as “best practices” that are implemented statewide by California Counties. This year’s theme is “The Power of Collaboration.”

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors proclaim May 2023 as “CalFresh Awareness Month” and urge all employees and residents of the County of Los Angeles to support the month-long activities by sharing this important information and resources with those in their communities who need it most.

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JH:mk/nh