

March 2025 Policy Updates for Los Angeles Regional Food Bank Agency Partners

Below are updates from the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank's Policy Team on recent anti-hunger legislation and programs.

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USDA Extensions of CalFresh Hot Foods Waiver and CalFresh Replacement Benefits Waiver for Residents Impacted by the Wildfire Disaster

The USDA extended the Replacement Benefits Waiver for CalFresh households that were impacted by the fires and power outages due to the wildfire disaster. Impacted households can apply for replacement CalFresh benefits. Reporting is normally 10 days to apply for replacement benefits, but this has been extended until **March 6, 2025**. Claims can be submitted using form CF303 in person or over the phone 866-613-3777. Claims can also be submitted online through Benefits Cal.

Additionally, the USDA extended the Hot Foods Waiver which allows existing CalFresh households to purchase prepared and hot foods through FNS authorized retailers. Under normal circumstances, CalFresh recipients cannot purchase hot and prepared foods that are ready for consumption. This waiver allows CalFresh households to purchase hot and prepared foods such as rotisserie chicken, hot meals and soup. The Hot Foods Waiver was extended to **March 10, 2025**. Claims can be submitted in person, over the phone and through Benefits Cal.

For more information visit: <https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/food.html>

House Budget Resolution Instructs House Agriculture Committee to Cut \$230 Billion Through 2034

The House of Representatives' Budget Committee passed [a Budget Resolution that instructs the House Agriculture Committee to cut \\$230 billion in federal expenditure](#) for the fiscal years 2025 through 2034. The expenditure reductions would most likely be made through cuts to SNAP/CalFresh. Members of the House Congressional Hispanic Conference [sent a letter urging leadership](#) not to cut food assistance and other programs, and Feeding America has [released a statement](#) urging Congress to consider the implications of Budget Reconciliation proposals for people experiencing hunger. The LARFB's Policy Team is monitoring federal budget negotiations, and we will be

engaging Members of Congress to share our region's priorities for federal nutrition programs and the demands facing our region.

Brook Rollins Confirmed as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Senate voted 72-28 to confirm Brooke Rollins' nomination to serve as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (USDA). Rollins [served as a White House aide in the first Trump Administration](#) and has spent the last four years as President and CEO of the America First Policy Institute (AFPI). Rollins, who graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in agricultural development and earned a J.D. from the University of Texas, was President Trump's domestic policy chief during his first term. Following her confirmation, [Secretary Rollins sent a letter to all state, local, tribal and territory government partners](#). In the letter, on the issue of SNAP, Rollins shared that she supports state innovation through approvals of waivers and pilot projects and will take swift action to minimize instances of fraud, waste, and program abuse. Rollins succeeds the Biden Administration's Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Continuing Resolution Funding the Federal Government to Expire March 14, 2025

In December, Congress passed a stop-gap spending bill, called a Continuing Resolution, to fund the government and avoid a government shutdown. The bill, called [the American Relief Act of 2025 \(H.R. 10545\)](#), funds the government at current levels through March 14. The Continuing Resolution included a Farm Bill extension until September 30, 2025, \$100 billion in disaster aid funding, and \$10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers. Currently, spending bills for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 25) need to be finalized, and it is possible that the current FY25 appropriations and the FY26 processes could overlap.

STATE POLICY UPDATE

State Issues New EBT Chip Cards for CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Relief (GR) Households to Prevent Fraud

The County's CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Relief (GR) recipient households will receive new security-enhanced EBT benefit cards that feature chips which are designed to curb fraud. Approximately 405,000 County residents are eligible to use Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. The most common ways benefits are stolen with current EBT cards are through skimming and scamming.

Recipient households are encouraged to use their new EBT card by tapping or inserting the chip side of the card into a card reader when making a purchase, rather than sliding it. All benefits will automatically be transferred to the new card. Personal information

and the pin number will remain the same. CalFresh households are being asked to destroy their old EBT cards after receiving the new replacement chip EBT cards.

[Click here to learn more about the new EBT Chip Cards](#)

2025-2026 State Anti-Hunger & Anti-Poverty Legislation

The following are key legislative bills that the LA Regional Food Bank will be supporting during this legislative session that are supported by the California Association of Food Banks:

AB 79 Public Social Services: Higher Education (Arambula)

This bill establishes a statewide knowledge sharing network of basic needs coordinators on college campuses and county liaisons of higher education to improve awareness of public benefit programs like CalFresh and CalWORKs among college students.

Click here to learn more: [AB 79 Bill Text](#) / [AB 79 Factsheet](#)

AB 636 Medical Diapers (Ortega)

This bill would ensure children 3 and older enrolled in Medi-Cal who have a prescription for diapers can receive them at no cost through a federal program within Medicaid, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.

Click here to learn more: [AB 79 Bill Text](#)

SB 411 (Perez) - SUN Bucks & Universal Online App

Existing federal law establishes the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program, under which pupils who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals receive \$40 per month, with specified adjustments, during summer months for grocery benefits. Existing federal regulations require, by 2025, the designated state agency to make a Summer EBT application available to households whose children are enrolled in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program and who do not already have an individual eligibility determination. This bill would also make an online application electronically available for all.

Click here to learn more: [SB 411 Bill Text](#)

LARFB Supports FY 2025 - 2026 \$60 Million CalFood Funding Request

The CalFood program enables food banks to purchase California-grown foods to meet our communities' diverse needs, enabling hunger-relief nonprofits to fight hunger and support our state's farmers and the California-grown food economy.

Each dollar of CalFood funding enables California food banks to provide approximately five meals. CalFood dollars allow food banks across the state to purchase more

expensive foods like eggs, dairy, poultry, and meats that are in high demand for families in need.

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, the California Association of Food Banks, and our anti-hunger advocacy partners are requesting that the Governor and state legislature approve an ongoing minimum funding level of \$60 million for the CalFood Program in the 2025-2026 state budget.

The network's goal will be to increase the current \$8 million in baseline funding for the program, set in the 2022-2023 budget, with an additional \$52 million of ongoing funding for a total of \$60 million in ongoing funding.

[Click here for a factsheet with more information about CalFood](#)

[Click here for the California Association of Food Banks' 2025 State Policy Agenda Factsheet.](#)

ACTION ALERT! CalFood Letter of Support

Join our effort to support the Calfood Campaign alongside the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) and sign a letter of support to ensure Calfood dollars continue to be a priority for our state legislators.

Click here to [Sign onto the CalFood Letter of Support](#)

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) New Two-Year Time Limit Waiver Approved

FNS has recently approved a new two-year statewide Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) time limit waiver in California. The approved two-year statewide ABAWD waiver is effective February 1, 2025, through January 31, 2027. Now that the rule is in effect, BenefitsCal will now show more ABAWD functionality on the website. Some questions will still be part of the application flow because counties still need to identify and track individuals defined as ABAWDs, but California will have a waiver in place so that those eligible are not subject to three-month time limits.

Click here to learn more: [February's CalSAWS Advocate Newsletter.](#)

CalAIM Community Support Guidance Issued for Medically Tailored and Medically Supportive Interventions

The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) released an updated version of CalAIM Community Supports guidance with an important distinction that has been made between medically tailored and medically supportive interventions (including medically supportive groceries), with the latter having more flexibility. The updates will apply to the following:

- ❖ For all intervention types, patients can be eligible solely on having a “nutrition-sensitive health condition” (and don’t need to have a hospitalization risk or care coordination need).
- ❖ Food interventions such as medically supportive groceries do not need to be paired with nutrition education.
- ❖ Required RDN engagement is lower for medically-supportive groceries.
- ❖ Medically-supportive groceries and produce prescriptions do not need to supply two-thirds of a patient’s diet, but are instead seen as supplements to the diet.

COUNTY POLICY UPDATE

60+ Organizations Support Sign-on Letter to LA County Board of Supervisors Requesting Grocery Card Assistance for Residents Impacted by the Wildfire Disaster

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Hunger Action Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Food Policy Council extend our gratitude to our agency partners who supported our sign-on letter urging the LA County Board of Supervisors to fund grocery card assistance for residents who have lost their homes and their jobs due to the Greater Los Angeles wildfire disaster.

Over 60 organizations signed on in support of the letter urging the County to continue supporting those in need by implementing the purchase and distribution of grocery cards to emergency aid organizations that will assist impacted residents.

[Click here to view the sign-on letter with the logos of supporting organizations.](#)

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