

California State Assembly



Informational Hearing Agenda

Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Human Services

Assemblymember Dr. Corey Jackson, Chair

Wednesday, February 25, 2026
1:30 P.M. – State Capitol, Room 126

Items To Be Heard		
Item	Description	Page
5180	Department of Social Services	5
Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CalFresh, Impacts of H.R. 1, and Proposals to Reduce Harm to People 2. County Administrative Backfill in Governor’s Budget and Oversight of Spending Regarding Penalty Error Rate (PER) Reduction 3. California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) 4. Emergency Food Banks and CalFood Funding 5. Proposal for CalFresh Enrollment for Eligible Students in Higher Education When Applying for Financial Aid 6. California Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Funding 7. CalWORKS – Rate of Homelessness and Denial Rate (Covering Family Stabilization, Housing Assistance Program, and Housing Support Program) 8. Immigration Services Programs Overview and Underserved Regions of the State 9. Guaranteed Income Pilot Program Implementation and Evaluation Update 	<p>5</p> <p>15</p> <p>19</p> <p>22</p> <p>26</p> <p>28</p> <p>30</p> <p>38</p> <p>40</p>
	Non-Presentation Issues	42
	10. Related Governor’s Budget Change Proposals (BCPs)	42
	11. Related Governor’s Trailer Bill Language (TBL) Proposals	43
	12. Holocaust Survivors Assistance Program	44
	13. Immigration Counsel Access Pilot	45

Panels

5180 Department of Social Services (DSS)

Issue 1: CalFresh, Impacts of H.R. 1, and Proposals to Reduce Harm to People

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Carlos Marquez, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)
- Ted Somera, Executive Director, United Public Employees Union, Representing CalFresh County Workers in Sacramento and Merced Counties
- Marla Stuart, Director, Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department
- Tiffany Whiten, Senior Government Relations Advocate, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO)
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance (DOF)

Issue 2: County Administrative Backfill in Governor's Budget and Oversight of Spending Regarding Penalty Error Rate (PER) Reduction

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Ryan Gillette, Deputy Director and Chief Data Officer, California Department of Social Services
- Andrew Cheyne, Managing Director, Government Relations & Public Affairs, County Welfare Directors Association of California
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 3: California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Jackie Mendelson, Policy Advocate, Nourish California
- Keely O'Brien, Policy Advocate, Western Center on Law & Poverty, on behalf of the California Anti-Hunger Response and Employment & Training (CARET) Coalition
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 4: Emergency Food Banks and CalFood Funding

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Josh Wright, Director of Government Relations, California Association of Food Banks
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 5: Proposal for CalFresh Enrollment for Eligible Students in Higher Education When Applying for Financial Aid

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Catalina Mistler, Chief Deputy Director, California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)
- Aaron Kunst, Co-Director, CalFresh Outreach, California State University at Chico, Center for Health Communities
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 6: California Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Funding

- Ryan Gillette, Deputy Director and Chief Data Officer, California Department of Social Services
- Lena Brook, Deputy Director, Fullwell
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 7: CalWORKs – Rate of Homelessness and Denial Rate (Covering Family Stabilization, Housing Assistance Program, and Housing Support Program)

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Michael Maniglia, Deputy Director, Self-Sufficiency Division, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
- Yesenia Robancho, Associate Director of Policy and Strategy, End Child Poverty California powered by GRACE
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Issue 8: Immigration Services Programs Overview and Underserved Regions of the State

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Eliana Kaimowitz, Director Office of Equity, California Department of Social Services
- Luz Gallegos, Executive Director, TODEC Legal Center (Inland Empire)
- Bruno Huizar, Supervising Policy Manager, Detention and Deportation, California Immigrant Policy Center
- Jackie Gonzalez, Co-Executive Director, Immigrant Defense Advocates (IDA)
- Juwan Trotter, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Lourdes Morales, Assistant Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance

Issue 9: Guaranteed Income Pilot Program Implementation and Evaluation Update

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Juwan Trotter, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Public Comment will be taken (in person only) after the completion of all panels and discussion, and this Public Comment will be for all issues covered in the hearing, including issues in the Non-Presentation part of the agenda (starting with Issue 10).

Thank you.

Items To Be Heard

5180 Department of Social Services (DSS)

Issue 1: CalFresh, Impacts of H.R. 1, and Proposals to Reduce Harm to People

Focus for the Subcommittee. This item will focus on the following:

1. The major changes in federal H.R. 1 for the CalFresh Program.
2. The number of people who are expected to lose food benefits because of these changes (total is approximately 800,000 Californians, with one in five on the CalFresh program subject to the new work requirements).
3. The budget and policy options to mitigate harm, maximize exemptions, and keep as many Californians receiving basic food benefits as possible.

Background on CalFresh

California has 5.5 million people on CalFresh/SNAP, or 13.6 percent of the population. There are over 3.3 million households (families) receiving CalFresh in California. California's caseload is 12 percent of the national population receiving SNAP benefits. In 2024-25, California received a total of over \$12.5 billion in CalFresh benefits, all of it federally funded.

The average benefit is \$194 per person per month, or \$6.46 per person per day. To participate in CalFresh, the gross income limit is 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$31,300 annual income for one person, and the net income limit is 100 percent of FPL, which is \$15,650 for one person. All households must meet the net income limit. Households in which all members receive or are eligible to receive cash assistance under CalWORKs, General Assistance/General Relief, SSI/SSP, CAPI, or Tribal TANF programs are categorically eligible for CalFresh benefits.

CalFresh/SNAP is the primary lifeline for Californians who struggle with food insecurity and access to healthy and nutritious food. Indigent, aged, blind, and disabled individuals, children, and the working poor rely on CalFresh/SNAP to eat on a daily basis.

CalFresh/SNAP Changes in H.R. 1

The changes in federal H.R. 1, signed into law on July 4, 2025, to CalFresh/SNAP were designed to make the program artificially smaller, more difficult to access and administer, and render it unrecognizable from its current form. CalFresh/SNAP is a major safety net program that decreases hunger and poverty for the most vulnerable people in California. H.R. 1 creates a significant risk of devastating and widespread benefit loss that will create a hunger crisis in California if left unmitigated.

The H.R. 1 changes for CalFresh/SNAP are vast, multiple, and cascading. The following chart is intended to summarize these many changes, using information provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and in this recent fact sheet on [Timeline of Funding Cuts to Medi-Cal and CalFresh in California](#) from the California Budget & Policy Center. The specific H.R. 1 changes are also outlined well in this recent post on [Food Assistance Programs](#) from the Legislative Analyst’s Office.

H.R. 1 Changes for CalFresh/SNAP

Impact Date	Change to CalFresh Due to H.R. 1	Who Is Impacted
July 4, 2025	Restricts internet expenses as allowable deductions for grant calculations, reducing benefits.	Applies to all CalFresh recipients, though the internet allowance had not yet been implemented in California.
October 1, 2025	Restricts adjustment of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP).	Once implemented, will impact all CalFresh recipients; the most significant and immediate impact is on households with nine or more people.
October 1, 2025	Eliminates the SNAP-Ed program.	CalFresh-funded nutrition education and obesity prevention programs, lost federal funding is \$178 million.
November 1, 2025	Limits the use of the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA).	Reduces benefits for CalFresh households that do not include a member over age 60 or who has a disability; increases paperwork.
November 1, 2025	Restricts time limit waivers to areas where the unemployment rate exceeds 10 percent for a recent 12-month period.	The work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) is waived from November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026 due to unemployment for the following counties: Alpine, Colusa, Imperial, Merced, Monterey, Plumas, and Tulare.
April 1, 2026	Eliminates CalFresh food assistance for many lawfully present immigrants.	About 72,000 refugees, asylees, humanitarian parolees, trafficking survivors, and other immigrants previously eligible under humanitarian protections will lose CalFresh and will not qualify for CFAP under current state and federal laws.
June 1, 2026	Expands and implements work requirements (average of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month) for ABAWDs and imposes restrictive time limits for those unable to meet requirements or qualify for an exemption.	All able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), including newly subject populations (caretakers of children 14 and older and adults age 55 through 64) and individuals who were previously exempted (former foster youth, veterans, and people experiencing homelessness); 70% of the current 954,800 people (664,800)

Impact Date	Change to CalFresh Due to H.R. 1	Who Is Impacted
		impacted are anticipated to drop from the caseload and lose CalFresh after three months for the balance of a three-year period.
October 1, 2026	Reduces the federal contribution to annual CalFresh administrative costs and shifts the cost to states; ratio changes from 50:50 to 25:75, increasing the percentage that counties pay from 15 percent to 22.5 percent.	Ongoing annual costs (for the current caseload) would increase because of this administrative cost shift by approximately \$480 million General Fund for the state and \$190 million for counties.
October 1, 2027	Requires California to pay a portion of CalFresh monthly benefits depending on our Payment Error Rate (PER); for October 1, 2027, the PER for the 2025 Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) will determine the benefit cost share.	California’s PER for FFY 2024 is 10.98 percent; for states above 10 percent, H.R. 1 includes a reduction in benefits cost coverage of 15 percent, which would be \$2 billion annually that the state would newly be responsible to pay that was previously fully funded by the federal government. If the state doesn't cover the cost of this portion of benefits, it will have to opt out of the program altogether, eliminating billions of dollars in annual federal food assistance and ending CalFresh as we know it. Reducing the PER incrementally reduces the state’s benefit cost share; states below 6 percent have zero cost share, with the federal government funding 100 percent of food benefits (as is the case today). This is discussed further under Issue 2.

ABAWD Work Requirements. Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) are limited to three months of CalFresh assistance in a three-year period unless they work or participate in qualifying activities for at least 20 hours per week. Until recently, California had a statewide waiver exempting all CalFresh recipients from the requirement based on economic conditions in the state. This effectively means that there were no work restrictions or time limits for the ABAWD population in California. H.R. 1 expands the ABAWD work requirement by:

- Applying it to adults through age 64, rather than 54.
- Applying it to adults caring for dependents aged 14 and older, rather than 18 and older.
- Eliminating exemptions for former foster youth, veterans, and homeless individuals. (These exemptions were scheduled to sunset in 2030.)

CDSS estimates that there are about 954,800 individuals that fit the expanded ABAWD criteria (compared to about 345,400 individuals who are estimated to meet the prior ABAWD criteria pre-H.R. 1). Of these 954,800, CDSS estimates that 18.8 percent will meet the work

requirements and that 11.5 percent will be found “unfit for work.” This means that of the 954,800 number, 289,000 ABAWDs (about 30.3 percent) will be exempt and meet the work requirements, leaving 665,500 estimated to not meet the requirements, be subject to the time limit, and lose eligibility for CalFresh. These discontinuances would occur gradually over 12 months, as affected recipients undergo annual recertification. Importantly, CDSS reports that over 250,000 ABAWDs of the total 954,800 without a known exemption have identified as homeless.

Impacts of H.R. 1 on Californians

The following chart on people impacted uses estimate information provided by CDSS.

H.R. 1 Impact on Lives in California

H.R. 1 Policy	Number of Individuals Who Will Lose Food Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement ABAWD Rules for pre-H.R. 1 – 345,400 people 	241,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend ABAWD Rules to new people who were formerly exempt – 609,400 	424,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly Excluded Non-Citizens (Refugees, Asylees, and others) 	72,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontinued Cases Due to the Standard Utility Allowance Change 	57,000
Total Lives Losing Food Benefits:	794,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CFAP Drop-Off Number Discussed under Issue 3 	22,700
New Total Lives Losing Food Benefits with the CFAP Discontinuances Included:	816,700

Available Budget and Policy Options to Reduce Harm

Harm Reduction Proposals to Mitigate Adverse Impacts of H.R. 1. Many of the issues in today’s agenda interrelate, so on the next page is a comprehensive chart including possible budget and policy actions for the Subcommittee’s consideration on how California can respond to the pending hunger crisis to mitigate the impacts of H.R. 1. These are not divorced from possible investments into the CalFood Program to continue, at minimum, the current level of emergency food benefits available from food banks and other investments that impact the vulnerable people, families, non-citizens, and children who will experience adverse impacts because of H.R. 1.

Harm Reduction Proposals – State Budget and Policy Actions to Mitigate Harm of H.R. 1

	Harm Reduction Proposal	Impact	General Fund Cost
1	Immediately allocate the \$20 million for ABAWD County Workload; this amount was included in the 2025 Budget Act and has not yet been allocated as of this writing.	Will provide resources for the 58 counties to better prepare for the wholesale and unprecedented new workload to maximize ABAWD exemptions and retain coverage for as many CalFresh recipients as possible starting June 1, 2026.	\$20 million GF was authorized in the 2025 Budget Act and will go unused without action in the current year.
2	Appropriate additional funds to enable counties to implement the new H.R. 1 rules for ABAWDs.	Will fund case management for the 954,800 ABAWDs projected to be subject to the new ABAWD work requirements, starting June 1, 2026.	\$102.81 million GF in 2026-27 and \$57.93 million GF in 2027-28 and ongoing.
3	Make state law changes and appropriate funding to further expand the CFAP program to allow it to provide food benefits to any recipient who loses CalFresh due to H.R. 1.	Will build the automation and system capacity for California to provide basic food benefits and to be more resilient to federal threats, if benefits can be funded in a future budget.	Unknown GF automation and other costs for 2026-27 and ongoing.
4	Make state law changes to simplify exemption-giving, consistent with federal law.	Creating blanket exemptions in state law provides clear state direction to the 58 counties on populations that reasonably can be interpreted to meet exemptions available under H.R. 1, attempting to ease the extreme administrative complexity and workload facing the CalFresh program. These could include a blanket exemption for any individual served, whether working or not, in the Regional Center system, and anyone who is homeless, qualifying them as “unfit for work.”	Unknown, potentially low or no cost.
5	Provide county match waiver to enable counties to continue to operate CalFresh.	Adopt a temporary CalFresh match waiver that maintains county contributions at 2024-25 levels through at least 2028-29 and provide a four-year phase-out at that time. This multi-year approach will give counties time to ramp up their CalFresh administration spending, avoiding potentially immediate and significant cuts, thereby preserving access to food assistance, protecting the state’s investment, and preventing the loss of federal funds with no net General Fund impact.	No General Fund impact; foregone county contribution (due to increase in county share) of \$149.5 million GF in 2026-27 and \$211 million GF in 2027-28 and ongoing.

6	Mitigate Pre-H.R. 1 County CalFresh Penalties for Federal Changes Outside of Counties' Control.	CWDA proposes that the 19 Performance Measurement Counties (PMCs) should not be financially responsible for federal sanctions resulting from policy decisions as a result of federal policies or circumstances in FFY 2026 and FFY 2027 that affect the PER, but that are outside of county administration.	Counties state that without this hold harmless policy, there will be even fewer resources and more administrative burden/workload.
---	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Staff also acknowledges that this is not an exhaustive list of options and that others might have additional ideas on how to mitigate the harm of H.R. 1 that all partners may want to consider and potentially incorporate into the June Budget.

Costs for California to Implement the ABAWD Changes. CDSS reports that the net administrative funding in 2025-26 for H.R. 1 ABAWD changes is \$2.7 million General Fund (\$7.5 million total funds). This includes funding for training for eligibility staff, confirming work hours, engagement at discontinuation (program exit for recipients), and noticing, offset by caseload reduction for ongoing administrative activities. The amounts included in the current fiscal year were already included in the June 2025 Budget, prior to the enactment of H.R. 1. There are no new additional resources in the current fiscal year, apart from the \$35 million General Fund (described in bullets below) available for allocation, which has yet to be utilized, or in the Governor’s Budget for 2026-27 and ongoing to resource the activities required to implement H.R. 1 changes or mitigate the large (70 percent) CalFresh disenrollment for ABAWDs. It is also questionable if the estimates for retention and guidance to counties in the related All County Letter (ACL) 25-93 to maximize exemptions can be achieved themselves in the absence of additional program resources.

At the end of the legislative session, in the summer of 2025, after H.R. 1 went into effect, changes were made to the 2025 Budget to begin to address the pending implementation.

These included:

- Upon approval of the Department of Finance, up to \$15 million General Fund to implement federal guidance on H.R. 1 implementation as it is released; and
- Up to \$20 million to support county implementation of changes to the ABAWD requirement.

These dollars have not yet been approved for release by the Department of Finance. Again, the number of ABAWDs newly subject to work requirements is 954,800. By contrast, the entire In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program caseload is estimated at 875,344 in 2026-27.

The chart on the next page from CWDA includes proposals across HHS and includes the CalFresh H.R. 1 components discussed under this Issue. The reason for including this chart is to show the comprehensive and total General Fund asks that the counties (with associated partners for each proposal) are holding up for consideration as the state considers how to stem the pending hunger crisis facing California because of H.R. 1, as well as on other issues that impact county services (Child Welfare Response and IHSS Community First Choice Options (CFCO) penalty payments). The interrelationship between the issues and the avoidance of

putting any of these proposals against one another is the reason for socializing this combined chart. It is important to state that 90 percent of CalFresh recipients are on Medi-Cal as well.

CWDA Budget Requests: Estimated General Fund (in millions)					
	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
CalFresh H.R. 1 ABAWD implementation	\$ 9.33	\$ 102.81	\$ 57.93	\$ 57.93	\$ 57.93
Medi-Cal H.R. 1 implementation	\$ -	\$ 230.90	\$ 304.67	\$ 175.93	\$ 114.07
Medi-Cal CPI restoration	\$ -	\$ 39.23	\$ 39.23	\$ 39.23	\$ 39.23
Child Welfare Emergency Response	\$ -	\$ 20.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 20.00
Maintain IHSS CFCO penalties 50/50*	\$ -	\$ 16.00	\$ 16.00	\$ 16.00	\$ 16.00
Total	\$ 9.33	\$ 408.94	\$ 437.83	\$ 309.10	\$ 247.23
For Awareness: State GF Backfill for County Admin HR 1 Admin Cost shift**					
	\$ -	\$ 149.50	\$ 211.00	\$ 211.00	\$ 211.00
*Cost is estimated to be no greater than \$16 million General Fund in FY 2026-27 based on actual invoices incurred in FY 2025-26 thus far. Out years may fluctuate based on caseload.					
** Out years approximate pending CDSS confirmation.					

Governor’s Trailer Bill Proposal on Disaster CalFresh

The Governor is proposing trailer bill on Disaster CalFresh and Waiver Requirements. Existing state law requires the CDSS to request authorization to operate Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) and subsequent emergency response waivers when there is a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration with Individual Assistance (IA). This proposal augments these requirements to instead allow CDSS and the disaster impacted counties to collaborate and determine whether D-CalFresh is part of an appropriate response given the unique impacts of the disaster.

Subcommittee staff have asked about what the time delay could be, caused under the new proposed requirements, before a final determination is made to provide Disaster CalFresh. CDSS has been asked to respond on how this timing compares to the current process to determine deployment of Disaster CalFresh. Staff has also asked for an explanation of what would happen to the, granted, small number of households (e.g. 10 or fewer) that would potentially not receive disaster assistance under this new rubric.

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ How has and will CalFresh change under H.R. 1?
- ◇ How many people in total are expected to lose food benefits as the HR 1 changes for ABAWDs and Non-Citizens implement?

- ◇ What can be done to further mitigate these adverse impacts that will increase hunger?
- ◇ How can California make its food benefits program more resilient against H.R. 1 and any future federal threats?
- ◇ What are the likely downstream effects of these reductions (e.g. adverse impacts for poor children, increased homelessness, negative health outcomes, etc.)?
- ◇ What are the Administration's reactions to the county/labor harm reduction proposals, including the CWDA investment and policy proposals?

Panel:

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Carlos Marquez, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)
- Ted Somera, Executive Director, United Public Employees Union, Representing CalFresh County Workers in Sacramento and Merced Counties
- Marla Stuart, Director, Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department
- Tiffany Whiten, Senior Government Relations Advocate, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO)
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance (DOF)

Staff Comments

As outlined under this issue, the risks of food benefit loss for California under H.R. 1 is profound and would be devastating for California's most vulnerable families, vulnerable adults, and children impacted in these households. In the absence of concerted state action to reduce the harm of H.R. 1, over 800,000 people will be cut off from a food benefit that they rely on to live.

Adequate investment in the county eligibility workforce will ensure that CalFresh recipients impacted by H.R. 1's harsh rules can retain life-saving access to food, reducing negative downstream health, housing, economic, and child welfare outcomes. Maximizing CalFresh benefit retention is critical given the unmatched scale of CalFresh compared to the capacity of the emergency food system. For every one meal provided by food banks, CalFresh delivers nine.

The Subcommittee is in receipt of a letter from Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez requesting that the state protect the CFAP 55+ expansion and invest approximately \$133 million to cover federal nutrition assistance cuts resulting from H.R. 1, thereby stabilizing California's food safety net and moving toward a more unified statewide eligibility system over time. Additionally, the Subcommittee is in receipt of a letter from Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez requesting \$14 million General Fund in 2026-27 to sustain the CalFresh Outreach program.

Staff Recommendation:

Requests for Feedback and Technical Assistance. In the interest of furthering the development of the options listed above, the Chair and Subcommittee could consider the following requests of the Administration and the Legislative Analyst's Office (numbers correspond to the proposals in the Harm Reduction Proposals table included above):

1. Request that the Administration respond as soon as possible (before March 1) to the request for the release of the \$20 million General Fund available in 2025-26. If the funds are not released, the Chair and Subcommittee may wish to ask for a written justification explaining why the funds are not being released for readiness activities related to the massive workload pending for counties starting June 1, 2026, for ABAWDs and implementation of H.R. 1 work requirements.
2. Request feedback on a technical assistance basis from the Administration on how the county requests for 2026-27 and ongoing reconcile to (1) the ABAWD All County Letter (25-83) released on December 31, 2025, and (2) the percentages assumed for work requirement compliance and exemptions included in the Governor's Budget. Would the county requests allow the state to meet these percentages and potentially improve on these numbers to yield greater retention than the 30 percent currently assumed in the Governor's Budget? The Chair could request an initial written response from the Administration on or before March 25, 2026.
3. Requests related to building capacity for the state to provide food benefits and to be resilient in reaction to federal threats:
 - A. Request assistance from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to assist with drafting trailer bill language in the interest of setting the policy as part of the 2026 Budget to expand on the CFAP Expansion to provide food benefits, when the system is enabled to do so, with benefits being subject to a budget appropriation, for individuals who are losing CalFresh as a result of H.R. 1. The LAO can work with the Subcommittee staff on timing and approach after this hearing.
 - B. Request technical assistance from the Administration on the automation and other non-benefit costs (General Fund and total funds) that would be necessary in 2026-27 and ongoing to prepare for and implement the proposed additional expansion of the CFAP Expansion (as enabled by policy being developed in #3A above), to be implemented by the earliest date possible (e.g. October 1, 2027). The Chair could request this estimate from the Administration on or before March 25, 2026, even as a placeholder, tentative amount (e.g. the \$38 million General Fund currently appropriated to prepare for the currently authorized CFAP Expansion as authorized in Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 18930).
4. Request feedback on a technical assistance basis from the Administration and your Legal Counsel(s) (for CalHHS, DSS, and DHCS) on the possible codification of blanket exemptions that allow for homeless individuals to be deemed "unfit to work" and to automatically exempt

individuals receiving services from Regional Centers under the Lanterman Act, whether they are working or not, from work requirements for CalFresh. Please also provide feedback on if these exemption simplifications can be utilized for pending Medi-Cal work requirements as well. The Chair could request an initial written response from the Administration on or before March 25, 2026.

5. Request feedback on a technical assistance basis from the Administration on the County Match Waiver proposal. The Chair could request an initial written response from the Administration on or before March 25, 2026.
6. Request feedback on a technical assistance basis from the Administration on the Mitigating Pre-H.R. 1 County CalFresh Penalties for Federal Changes Outside of the Counties' Control. The Chair could request an initial written response from the Administration on or before March 25, 2026.

Additionally, staff requests the universal number of ABAWDs impacted by H.R. 1, a number presumed to be larger than the 954,800, and how that larger number (or the delta) parses in terms of flagged exemptions that exclude those additional cases from the 954,800. Please explain how this flagging will work and what workload is required of counties, and how that is being resourced in the Governor's Budget, to interact with these cases. Of the 609,400 new ABAWDs post-H.R. 1, due to the revoking of prior exemptions, please parse out the number of cases per prior categories (i.e. veterans, homeless, or former foster youth). Please provide these numbers and detailed categories in writing to the Subcommittee as soon as possible, before or by February 27, 2026.

In the meantime, these issues will be held open.

Issue 2: County Administrative Backfill in Governor’s Budget and Oversight of Spending Regarding Penalty Error Rate (PER) Reduction

The Governor’s Budget includes an increase of \$382.9 million General Fund in 2026-27 to reflect the federal share of CalFresh administrative cost reduction changing from 50 percent to 25 percent beginning October 1, 2026, pursuant to the policy changes impacting CalFresh, or California’s version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), in H.R. 1. The Budget assumes this General Fund increase and county share of cost increases.

The Governor’s Budget also estimates administrative impacts on the state and counties related to H.R. 1 implementation. [The chart from the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) below differs from the numbers provided from CDSS for Issue 1.] These impacts include some new funding for higher workload and automation changes, partially offset by reductions accounting for recipients leaving the program due to H.R. 1 policies. The Governor’s Budget also accounts for a significant increase in state and county costs for CalFresh administration due to H.R. 1 changes in shares of cost.

Estimated H.R. 1 Impacts on CalFresh and CFAP Administration

(Dollars in Millions)

	2025-26				2026-27			
	Total	Federal	General Fund	County	Total	Federal	General Fund	County
ABAWD Work Requirement								
New administration and automation costs	\$8.4	\$4.2	\$3.0	\$1.2	\$78.4	\$24.3	\$38.0	\$16.1
Caseload impact	—	—	—	—	-78.6	-24.4	-38.1	-16.1
Subtotals	(\$8.4)	(\$4.2)	(\$3.0)	(\$1.2)	(-\$0.2)	(-\$0.1)	(-\$0.1)	(—^a)
Noncitizen Eligibility Change	—	—	—	—	-\$12.1	-\$2.5	-\$7.9	-\$1.7
SUAS Restriction	-\$5.5	-\$2.7	-\$2.0	-\$0.8	-\$15.6	-\$4.8	-\$7.6	-\$3.2
Total Administrative Cost Changes	\$2.9	\$1.5	\$1.0	\$0.4	-\$27.9	-\$7.4	-\$15.6	-\$4.9
Increased State and County Share of Cost^b	—	—	—	—	—	-\$502	\$359	\$143

^aLess than \$500,000.

^bEstimated H.R. 1 administrative impacts related to the ABAWD work requirement, noncitizen eligibility change, and SUAS restriction already reflect the increased state and county share of cost. Those impacts are also reflected in this line, resulting in minor overlap.

CFAP = California Food Assistance Program; ABAWD = able-bodied adult without dependents; and SUAS = State Utility Assistance Subsidy.

Increased State and County Share of Administrative Costs. Beginning October 2026, H.R. 1 reduces federal support for administrative costs from 50 percent to 25 percent. State law requires counties to cover 30 percent of the nonfederal share, meaning that the county share will increase to 22.5 percent and the state share will increase to 52.5 percent, as shown in the figure from the LAO below. This change is expected to result in annual ongoing costs of about \$480 million for the state and \$190 million for counties.

CalFresh Administration Funding Responsibilities

	Current	Beginning October 2026
Federal	50.0%	25.0%
State	35.0	52.5
Counties	15.0	22.5

Shifts Benefit Costs to the State. Beginning October 2027, H.R. 1 requires states to cover a portion of what now are federally funded CalFresh benefits. This state share is only imposed on states that have a payment error rate (PER) of 6 percent or higher. As shown in the figure from the LAO below, the amount of the state share depends on how much the state’s error rate exceeds 6 percent. Based on the state’s most recently measured payment error rate of 11 percent, the state would have a 15 percent share of CalFresh benefit costs, resulting in about \$2 billion in new annual costs.

H.R. 1 determines the state’s initial share of benefit costs for federal fiscal year 2027-28 (October 2027 through September 2028) based on the payment error rate in either federal fiscal year 2024-25 or 2025-26, at the state’s option. While not yet published, the state’s payment error rate for federal fiscal year 2024-25 (the most recently ended federal fiscal year) likely is not significantly lower than the 11 percent rate for 2023-24. Consequently, the state’s opportunity to mitigate increased benefit costs likely depends on the payment error rate in 2025-26, the current federal fiscal year. For 2028-29 and later federal fiscal years, the payment error rate from three years prior will be used. This means that the payment error rate in the current federal fiscal year will also determine the state’s share of CalFresh benefit costs in federal fiscal year 2028-29.

State Shares of CalFresh Benefit Costs for Different Payment Error Rates

Payment Error Rate	State Share of Benefit Costs	Approximate Annual California Cost
Less than 6%	—	—
From 6% to less than 8%	5%	\$650 million
From 8% to less than 10%	10	1.3 billion
10% or greater	15	2 billion

The 2025 Budget was amended at the end of session in 2025 to include investments (described in the next chart) to assist with lowering the PER. The Subcommittee will ask for an update on these efforts.

Component (Dollars are in millions)	2025-26 General Fund	2025-26 Other Funds	Notes
Cost Components			
1. Immediate Automation Changes	3.2	5.9	one-time (of the other funds, \$4.6 million is federal, \$1.3 is county)
2. State Operations - Ten One-Year Limited-Term Positions	1.3	1.3	one-time
3. Payment Error Mitigation Strategy			
a. Data and Technology Enhancements	17.1	17.0	\$4.4 M GF (\$1.5 M other funds) are ongoing
a) Improve quality and frequency of income verification	1.5	1.5	
b) Establish Application Program Interface (API)	1.9	1.8	
c) Enhance back-end automation to support eligibility workers	6.2	6.2	
d) Expand use of intelligent Optical Character Recognition to scan paperwork and extract key data	7.5	7.5	
b. State Level Data and Response	1.7	1.6	one-time
a) Internal Data Infrastructure	0.7	0.6	
b) Low Code Platform	1.0	1.0	
c. Client Communication and Education	1.3	1.2	\$1.1 M GF (\$0.4 M other funds) are ongoing
a) Expand client communications and information to highlight reporting requirements	0.5	0.5	
b) Proactive communications and notifications	0.8	0.7	
d. State and County Operations	7.5	7.5	one-time
a) Statewide communications campaign	2.5	2.5	
b) Integrate external expertise and implementation augmentation	5.0	5.0	
Total	32.1	34.5	

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ Please describe the Governor’s proposal on the county administrative backfill.
- ◇ Please review the implementation of funds provided in 2025-26 for the PER reduction, the high-level findings of root causes so far, and the planned areas of emphasis to reduce the PER.

Panel:

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Ryan Gillette, Deputy Director and Chief Data Officer, California Department of Social Services
- Andrew Cheyne, Managing Director, Government Relations & Public Affairs, County Welfare Directors Association of California
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

Staff look forward to continuing updates on the progress on the PER workload, root cause identification, and key strategies to reduce the PER pursuant to the appropriations made in the 2025 Budget Act.

Staff notes that the strategies to mitigate the harm of H.R. 1 for CalFresh outlined under Issue 1 may also produce helpful impacts for the PER.

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 3: California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

The following background was provided by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).

“The California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Provides State-Funded Food Assistance to Certain Legally Present Noncitizens. In 1996, Congress passed a welfare reform bill that, among other things, restricted federal food assistance for certain noncitizens. Most notably, some legally present noncitizens (primarily legal permanent residents) were rendered ineligible for federally funded nutrition assistance until they had resided in the country for five years. The federal government gave states the option to use the CalFresh benefit delivery infrastructure (including federally supported payment systems) to provide state-funded food assistance to populations affected by this 1996 policy change, provided the state reimburses the federal government for related costs. In response, California established CFAP. CFAP benefits are equal to those provided by CalFresh. In 2024-25, CFAP provided \$135 million in food assistance to about 63,000 people, for an average benefit of about \$180 per person.

Subject to Appropriation, CFAP to Be Expanded to Additional Income-Eligible Noncitizens. Some noncitizens, including those who are undocumented, are currently ineligible for CFAP based on immigration status. Recent state spending plans included funding to expand CFAP to all income-eligible noncitizens aged 55 and older, regardless of immigration status. Implementation was initially expected in October 2025. However, as a budget solution, the 2024-25 spending plan delayed the expansion implementation by two years. Upon appropriation by the Legislature, benefit distribution for recipients made newly eligible through the expansion is to begin in 2027-28 (the date is October 1, 2027).

Subject to Appropriation, Budget Maintains Delayed Implementation of CFAP Expansion. The Governor's Budget continues to assume CFAP's expansion to all income-eligible individuals age 55 and older regardless of immigration will occur in 2027-28, subject to an appropriation in next year's budget. The administration has most recently estimated that the cost to implement the expansion would eventually reach \$169 million (all from the General Fund) and provide assistance to 74,000 people once fully phased in. There are \$38 million in resources currently being utilized for automation, training, and outreach to prepare for the October 1, 2027 implementation date.

Future Cost of CFAP Expansion Depends on Complex and Uncertain Demographic Changes. Estimates of the cost of benefits for the undocumented population are generally subject to considerable uncertainty. Undocumented individuals can be challenging to accurately identify in survey data. Survey data are usually a few years old at the time they become available, making it challenging to reflect more recent dynamics in estimates. Recent developments make such estimates especially uncertain at this time. First, the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States grew significantly from 2021 through 2024. The share of this growth in California is less clear and the impacts are only just beginning to emerge in survey data, but California's undocumented population likely grew as well. Second, increased immigration enforcement by the federal government starting in 2025 likely partially offsets some

of the growth in the undocumented population, including in California. Further, increased immigration enforcement may reduce take-up of public benefits to an uncertain degree.

Expansion Costs Likely Higher Than Previously Estimated. Overall, the LAO believes the recent developments just described mean that previously developed estimates of CFAP expansion costs likely understate what costs ultimately would be. Of note, full-scope coverage in Medi-Cal was expanded to cover otherwise eligible individuals age 50 and older regardless of immigration status in May 2022, during growth in undocumented populations. As of October 2025, the 50 and older Medi-Cal expansion population included about 444,000 individuals, considerably higher than originally projected for this population. While some aspects of eligibility determination processes differ between Medi-Cal and CalFresh, the income thresholds for the two programs are similar. Based on this Medi-Cal administrative data, the LAO estimates that the number of individuals that ultimately would enroll in the CFAP expansion for ages 55 and older would likely be between 104,000 and 264,000. The LAO estimates this would result in ongoing General Fund food assistance costs of between \$250 million and \$630 million, assuming full ramp-up in 2029-30. (The time to full ramp-up is also subject to significant uncertainty for the same reasons already noted, such that costs in the initial year may be significantly less than at full-ramp-up.) The LAO notes that these costs add to out-year deficits identified by the Governor, since we understand the Governor’s budget does not include any CFAP expansion costs in its multiyear baseline since the expansion is subject to future appropriation.”

22,700 CFAP Recipients to be Disenrolled. Based on August 2025 point in time CDSS Enterprise Data Pipeline data, approximately 22,700 noncitizens may currently be incorrectly receiving state-only CFAP benefits instead of CalFresh benefits. This represents 38.3 percent of the current 59,300 CFAP caseload. These individuals were financially eligible for benefits; the error is that they were provided state-only CFAP benefits, instead of CalFresh benefits (the benefit amounts of which are identical for recipients). However, with the changes to noncitizen eligibility due to H.R. 1, the majority of these individuals will no longer be eligible for CalFresh starting April 1, 2026. These individuals are included in the table of people impacted by H.R. 1 discussed in Issue 1.

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ Please explain the plan and progress toward the October 1, 2027 date for implementation of the CFAP Expansion, subject to appropriation.
- ◇ Can the CFAP Expansion, once complete, be utilized, if funded, to provide food benefits to people who may lose CalFresh due to H.R. 1?
- ◇ Please explain the change resulting in 22,700 CFAP recipients losing benefits. Similarly, can these individuals receive food benefits from the CFAP Expansion, if funded?

Panel:

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Jackie Mendelson, Policy Advocate, Nourish California
- Keely O'Brien, Policy Advocate, Western Center on Law & Poverty, on behalf of the California Anti-Hunger Response and Employment & Training (CARET) Coalition
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

Staff refers readers on this Issue to Issue 1, where the further expansion of CFAP is discussed and where there are recommendations for the Chair and Subcommittee related to this proposal.

As also included under Issue 1, the Subcommittee is in receipt of a letter from Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez requesting that the state protect the CFAP 55+ expansion and invest approximately \$133 million to cover federal nutrition assistance cuts resulting from H.R. 1, thereby stabilizing California's food safety net and moving toward a more unified statewide eligibility system over time.

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 4: Emergency Food Banks and CalFood Funding

CalFood received \$80 million (all General Fund) in the 2025 Budget act, with \$20 million added to the \$60 million that was in the June 2025 Budget at the end of session in reaction to H.R. 1. The Governor's Budget resets the amount for CalFood back to the baseline amount of \$8 million General Fund for 2026-27 and ongoing, or 10 percent of what was provided for the current fiscal year. The California Association of Food Banks is requesting a total of \$110 million (total General Fund) in 2026-27 (\$52 million to augment the \$8 million base on-going and then \$50 million one-time) so that food banks can respond to the hunger crisis that currently exists and that is expected to dramatically worsen as the policies of H.R. 1 as outlined under Issue 1 implement in our state.

The following information was provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Update on Expenditure of the \$80 million for CalFood in 2025-26. As of January 13, 2026, 48 percent of CalFood ongoing funding has been spent (\$5.3 million) and 14 percent of one-time CalFood has been spent (\$29 million). As of that date, a total of \$34.3 million had been spent and \$45.7 million remained to be spent. Currently, the spending rate reflects approximately 5 percent of the total each month, but CDSS expects to see a substantial increase in that rate when January 2026 invoices are reconciled since each food bank needed to submit expense reimbursement requests for at least 40 percent of their total allocation by the end of 2025. All 2025-26 CalFood ongoing must be fully expended by April 30, 2026, and one-time funding must be fully expended by June 30, 2026. CDSS anticipates food banks will use all available funding by that time.

Impact If CalFood Only Receives \$8 Million GF for 2026-27. CDSS states that food banks will adjust their food purchases accordingly and rely more on philanthropic sources where possible. After several consecutive years of "one-time" enhancements to the CalFood baseline funding of \$8 million, this may be a significant shock to some food bank partners who have relied on this supplement to better serve their communities. CalFood funding has enabled food banks to purchase more culturally responsive foods, often from local vendors, to serve their communities. Reduced CalFood funding will mean fewer resources to make these kinds of purchases.

Total Funding Picture for Emergency Food Banks for California. Overall, federal funding for food bank programs' administrative costs is relatively flat in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2026 compared to last year, but down over 30 percent compared to two years ago. Food shipments from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the first quarter of FFY 2026 are up 57 percent compared to the same period in FFY 2025, but given the unpredictable nature of USDA Bonus food offerings from quarter to quarter, it is difficult to forecast whether this pace will continue. Comparing FFY 2024 to FFY 2025, overall USDA food shipments to California was down 7 percent year over year.

Federal Funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) for FFY 2026. TEFAP administrative funding (\$10 million) is down 1.5 percent compared to last year, but that amount is pending USDA's food conversion to administrative dollars. Last year California was

able to convert \$11 million in food dollars to administration for food bank support, and that may be a similar number this year. TEFAP Food (including USDA Entitlement Food and Section 32 Bonus Offerings) shipments for the first quarter of FFY 2026 totaled 38.2 million pounds, valued at \$41.8 million.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) for FFY 2026. USDA approved a 1% increase to California’s CSFP caseload in FFY 2026. California’s CSFP partners will serve 110,161 older adults in FFY 2026, up from 109,047 in FFY 2025. CSFP administrative funding for FFY 2026 is \$11.6 million, up 1%. Below is a chart showing total funding for state and federal food bank programs administered by CDSS over the last three state fiscal years:

CDSS Food Assistance Programs Administered via Food Banks			
<i>TEFAP, CSFP, CalFood, Tax Check Off, State Food Assistance</i>			
	FY 2023-24*	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26**
Funds for Operational Costs:	\$ 31,950,903	\$ 33,255,925	\$ 21,636,745
Funds for Food Purchases:	\$ 155,600,425	\$ 102,368,285	\$ 89,000,000
TOTAL FUNDING:	\$ 155,600,425	\$ 101,368,285	\$ 110,636,745
Year-Over-Year % Change:		-35%	9%
Pounds of Food Received (TEFAP/CSFP)	180,769,338	167,453,412	N/A
Year-Over-Year % Change:		-7%	N/A

*note that the CalFood amount in FY 2023-24 was multi-year funding

**note that FY 2025-26 total funds of food and TEFAP funds for operational costs won't be available until end of Oct 2026 for TEFAP/CSFP

CDSS partners with 50 food banks in California to administer select state and federal food programs such as CalFood, TEFAP, and CSFP, but the Department does not have visibility into food banks’ overall funding including donated and purchased commodities.

H.R. 1 Changes Likely to Increase Food Bank Demand. As already described, H.R. 1 is expected to result in significant disenrollment and loss of CalFresh and CFAP assistance. As these changes roll out, it is likely that demand for assistance from food banks, who serve a role of supplementing CalFresh and CFAP, will increase. Anticipation of such need was the primary motivating factor behind the 2025-26 spending plan’s inclusion of an additional \$72 million for the CalFood program.

Food Banks Fund Operations From a Variety of Sources. Operations at individual food banks across the state vary. But in aggregate, the largest source of funding for food banks is private funds and other donations. Food banks report that recently, federal support (primarily through TEFAP) made up about 25 percent funding, the state CalFood program made up about 8 percent, and private funds and other donations made up the rest.

Food Bank Response Constrained by Available Funding. As H.R. 1 changes are implemented, food banks are positioned to offset some of the losses in federal food assistance funding in CalFresh. However, food banks' response will be limited by available funding as well as infrastructure capacity, making it challenging to fully offset lost federal assistance.

Update on Diaper Funding in the 2025 Budget. All Diaper and Wipe Program funding is on track to be fully expended by June 30, 2026. The full \$7.4 million General Fund amount has been allocated and advanced to the Diaper and Wipe Recipients. With \$239,000 reconciled, the remaining \$7.1 million is expected to be reconciled by the end of the fiscal year.

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ What have been the experiences of emergency food banks in terms of demand since July 1 and in recent years?
- ◇ Please explain changes in funding amounts and dynamics and how these have affected food bank capacity in the aggregate?
- ◇ Why did the Governor's Budget reduce CalFood funding to its lowest level, the baseline \$8 million General Fund, when CalFood received ten times that amount in 2025-26?
- ◇ What will be the likely impacts of H.R. 1 policies on hunger in California and on demand for emergency food?

Panel:

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Josh Wright, Director of Government Relations, California Association of Food Banks
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

The Administration has indicated that it will soon have updated invoice information that can reveal the use of the 2025-26 appropriated \$80 million General Fund and when it is foreseeable that food banks will fully exhaust these funds.

Staff Recommendation:

The Chair and the Subcommittee may wish to request updates on the CalFood use of funds once invoice information is received. The Chair may wish to indicate a check-in date of March 25, 2026, unless the Administration advises of a better date (earlier or later) when the information can be expected.

In the meantime, these issues will be held open.

Issue 5: Proposal for CalFresh Enrollment for Eligible Students in Higher Education When Applying for Financial Aid

This proposal aims to make enrollment in higher education a seamless and integrated pathway to CalFresh participation for California students. Specifically, it would require the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to coordinate with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop and implement a process that automatically enrolls eligible students into the CalFresh program.

A recent survey from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), titled “College Enrollment under California’s New Financial Aid Application Policy,” found that 71 percent of California parents want their children to attain at least a bachelor’s degree. The survey also found that nearly the same share of parents worries about the cost of attending college and the burden of student debt.

In 2021, the Legislature enacted AB 132, which required school districts (beginning in the 2022–23 academic year) to ensure that graduating seniors complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), or an opt-out form. Research from the PPIC and others shows that AB 132 and similar efforts have helped increase CalFresh participation. However, significant gaps remain. A 2024 report from the California Policy Lab, titled “Filling the Gap: CalFresh Eligibility Among University of California and California Community College Students,” found that participation rates among eligible students still lag. For example, in Fall 2019, 26% of eligible California Community College students participated in CalFresh, in addition to 22% of eligible University of California undergraduate students.

Together, these findings highlight both recent progress and the continued opportunity for California to strengthen access to food assistance for college students. By closing participation gaps, the state can provide greater stability that supports students’ basic needs and their ability to succeed in higher education.

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ What have prior reviews/reports regarding CalFresh needs for students in higher education told us (e.g. how many students are estimated to be eligible against how many who are enrolled)?
- ◇ What can be done to leverage the information provided in the FAFSA to help enroll students into CalFresh and what concerns or challenges might this also present?
- ◇ What are other strategies that can be employed to boost CalFresh enrollment for students who qualify?

Panel:

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Catalina Mistler, Chief Deputy Director, California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)
- Aaron Kunst, Co-Director, CalFresh Outreach, California State University at Chico, Center for Health Communities
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

This issue is a priority for the Chair. The Chair’s office will be in contact with the California Student Aid Commission, the California Department of Social Services, and the Department of Finance to further discuss this and garner estimates on funding that may be necessary to advance the cause of enrolling more students in the higher education segments who are eligible for CalFresh.

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 6: California Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Funding

The 2025 Budget included \$36 million General Fund for the third iteration of the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable (CF&V) Pilot, which successfully relaunched on November 17, 2025, and is live. Ninety-one retail locations are currently participating across ten counties located in Santa Clara, Alameda, Monterey, Mendocino, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, and San Diego. The current iteration of the pilot has one participating farmers' market location, the Los Angeles River Farmers' Market.

According to CDSS, as of January 1, 2026, 31,267 unique households have earned CF&V incentives during this iteration of the pilot, averaging \$48.40 redeemed per household per month. In all, \$7,355,224 of CF&V incentives have been issued as of January 27, 2026, leaving \$26,889,442 remaining to continue CF&V pilot operations.

The Subcommittee is in receipt of a letter from Assemblymember Alex Lee requesting \$100 million in one-time funding in the 2026-27 state budget to extend and expand the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project (also known as CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Program.) This funding would enable the program to reach 2.5 times more families in more regions of California and run uninterrupted for the entire fiscal year. As noted above, the program operates at 91 grocery stores and one farmers' market, which collectively serve 67,000 CalFresh households each month. With this additional funding, the program could reach 168,000 CalFresh households, including expansion into areas of California that currently have no participating retailers.

This highly successful and popular program has gone through three budget cycles to date. The first two phases of the program ended prematurely when they ran out of funds because the program is used by so many families. The Assemblymember's goal is to ensure that it runs uninterrupted during 2026-27. According to a November 2025 survey by the Public Policy Institute of California, 30 percent of Californians say they or someone in their household have cut back on food to save money in the past year. This program is essential in alleviating hardship and increasing access to healthy food for low-income Californians. Without additional funding in the 2026-27 budget, the program will likely run out of funds by July 2026, leaving tens of thousands of Californians with fewer resources to put food on their tables.

Panel**Questions for the Panel:**

- ◇ Please describe the program history and what have been the outcomes of prior investments in this pilot?
- ◇ How is the current implementation going and what is the "burn rate" you're observing?
- ◇ If the effort was funded to provide these benefits for the whole 2026-27 year, how much General Fund would be required?

Panel:

- Ryan Gillette, Deputy Director and Chief Data Officer, California Department of Social Services
- Lena Brook, Deputy Director, Fullwell
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

Below are questions shared by Assemblymember Alex Lee’s office on the CalFresh F&V EBT pilot:

1. Please describe the reach and utilization of the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT pilot program across its three funding cycles. What do the program and survey data show thus far about how CalFresh families are benefiting from this program?

For the current funding cycle, we'd like for CDSS to present two data sets to show trends:

- 90 days of data, November 17, 2025 - February 17, 2026
- And, almost three months of monthly data: December 2025, January 2026, and most of February 2026

2. This program has run on a temporary basis for several budget cycles now. What is CDSS's cost estimate for the administrative burden to the Department resulting from inefficiencies caused by the stop/start nature of the pilot program thus far? Are there other inefficiencies that we need to be aware of, i.e. around communications, EBT vendors, retailers?
3. Large swaths of California are currently unserved by the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT program. If expansion were possible, which regions or geographic areas of the state would you prioritize and why?

Staff Recommendation:

The Chair and Subcommittee may wish to make the requests suggested by Assemblymember Lee, with written responses received before or by Wednesday, March 18, 2026.

In the meantime, this issue will be held open.

Issue 7: CalWORKs – Rate of Homelessness and Denial Rate (Covering Family Stabilization, Housing Assistance Program, and Housing Support Program)

This issue provides some basic background on the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, followed by detailed information provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on the utilization of housing and homelessness for CalWORKs families. The Governor’s budget proposes about \$7.1 billion in 2025-26 and \$7.2 billion in 2026-27 and there are no newly proposed augmentations or reductions. For more information on CalWORKs eligibility, caseload demographics, grants, and recent program efforts to improve the program, please see the Subcommittee’s February 26, 2025 agenda, [available here](#), and the [recent post](#) on CalWORKs from the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO).

In 2025-26, the total projected persons count for the CalWORKs caseload is 919,000 people, including approximately 700,100 children, or 76 percent of the caseload, and 218,900 adults. In 2026-27, the total projected persons count is 928,700, including approximately 707,400 children, or 76 percent, and 221,300 adults. Based on 2024 data, 43.2 percent of CalWORKs adults have a high school education/GED or higher. 37.7 percent have completed high school/have GED, and 5.5 percent have more than a high school education.

CalWORKs Budget Summary

All Funds (Dollars in Millions)

	2025-26	2026-27 Proposed	Change From 2025-26 to 2026-27 Proposed	
			Amount	Percent
Number of CalWORKs Cases	356,744	360,137	3,393	1%
Cash Grants	\$4,270	\$4,310	\$40	1%
Single Allocation				
Employment services	\$1,193	\$1,220	\$26	2%
Cal-Learn case management	11	11	—	1
Eligibility determination and administration	453	453	—	—
Subtotals	(\$1,657)	(\$1,683)	(\$26)	(2%)
Stage 1 Child Care	\$615	\$630	\$15	2%
Other Allocations				
Home Visiting Program	\$94	\$120	\$26	28%
Housing Support Program	95	95	—	—
Expanded Subsidized Employment	134	134	—	—
Family Stabilization	66	67	1	1
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	104	130	26	25
Subtotals	(\$493)	(\$546)	(\$53)	(11%)
Other^a	\$52	\$23	-\$30	-57%
Totals	\$7,087	\$7,192	\$104	1%

^aPrimarily includes various state-level contracts.

CalWORKs Denial Rate. CDSS reports a denial rate in October 2025 of 45.4 percent. 55,498 applications were on hand for the month and 25,207 were denied. Historically, CDSS reports that the denial rate was 30.8 percent in 2022-23, 36.5 percent in 2023-24, and 39.1 percent in 2024-25.

Housing Instability and Homelessness in the CalWORKs Caseloads. Based on the most recent available data from October 2025, 7,178 of 44,877 CalWORKs applicants, or just under 16 percent, identified as homeless. There are three programs that provide housing and homelessness services for CalWORKs families: Family Stabilization Program, Homeless Assistance Program, and Housing Support Program. CDSS has provided the following information for each of these.

CalWORKs Family Stabilization provides intensive case management and services for families experiencing a crisis. Family Stabilization is provided to the entire family when needed and is an essential wraparound service to allow families to address immediate needs such as housing and homelessness, mental and behavioral health, and substance use so that they can ultimately achieve their goals for economic mobility and well-being. Family Stabilization does not track a rate of homelessness; however, in 2024-25 approximately 10,956 families received some level of housing or homelessness support or service through the Family Stabilization component of CalWORKs. In 2024-25, approximately 38,279 families received more than 67,193 services through the Family Stabilization program.

Utilization of CalWORKs Homeless Assistance (HA) also provides an additional indicator of homelessness within the CalWORKs population. In 2024–25, approximately 15 percent of the CalWORKs caseload requested either Temporary or Permanent HA. This represents roughly 82,000 families out of 479,048 families receiving CalWORKs between June 30, 2024, and July 1, 2025, and reflects an increase of more than 3,700 families requesting HA compared to the prior year.

These figures may understate the prevalence of homelessness among families receiving CalWORKs, as not all families experiencing housing instability request HA. Some families may attempt to address housing challenges independently or seek assistance through other programs, including the Housing Support Program (HSP). Additionally, some families access multiple housing-related programs, resulting in overlap across program caseloads. As a result, counts of families served by CalWORKs Homeless Assistance (HA), the Housing Support Program (HSP), and the Family Stabilization Program (FSP) should not be aggregated, as that could result in duplicated data. Program utilization figures should instead be interpreted separately for each program.

CDSS is actively working to integrate data between CalWORKs and the Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS). In January, the Department reached a key milestone by completing a full data match between these systems. This integration will support an alternative analysis, including assessing the share of CalWORKs recipients who are also receiving housing-related services as seen in data from local homeless response systems statewide.

For the CalWORKs Family Stabilization program, counties have historically exceeded their allocated funding. The 2024-25 year reflect funding expenditures at 89.69 percent of allocation, with close out adjustments still in process.

CalWORKs Family Stabilization			
Fiscal Year	Allocation	Expenditures	Percent Spent
FY 2024-25*	\$71,200,000	\$63,858,190	89.69%
FY 2025-26**	\$60,793,000	\$11,403,560	18.76%
Fiscal Year Notes: * FY 2024-25 expenditures are point in time as of 01/23/2026 and are pending closeout and/or adjustment claims and include September 2024 Quarter adjustment claims. ** FY 2025-26 expenditures are point in time as of 01/23/2026 and are pending closeout and/or adjustment claims and reflect September 2025 Quarter original claims.			

Grantees do not traditionally submit claims beyond their allocated amounts as they do not anticipate being reimbursed beyond their funding allocations. For HSP specifically, grantees are returning to the annual \$95 million after two tranches of \$190 million in multi-year funding in 2021-22 and 2022-23 that were able to meet more of the need from local families at risk of or experiencing homelessness and in receipt of CalWORKs over the past several years. The expenditure deadline for Housing Support Program funds appropriated prior to 2025–26 was December 2025; as a result, these funds are no longer available. Counties are working to transition the scale of their programs to align with the ongoing \$95 million annual appropriation, with some counties expected to pause new enrollments, reduce service levels, and transition current participants to other available programs, where possible. The table below demonstrates that the HSP has \$95 million available for use in 2025-26.

Year	Appropriation	Status of Expenditure Timelines
2021-22	\$285,000,000 (\$190m one-time + \$95m ongoing)	Expenditure deadlines passed
2022-23	\$285,000,000 (\$190m one-time + \$95m ongoing)	Expenditure deadlines passed
2023-24	\$95,000,000	Expenditure deadlines passed
2024-25	\$95,000,000	Expenditure deadlines passed
2025-26	\$95,000,000	Available through June 30, 2026

County Expenditure Status by HSP Funding Allocation

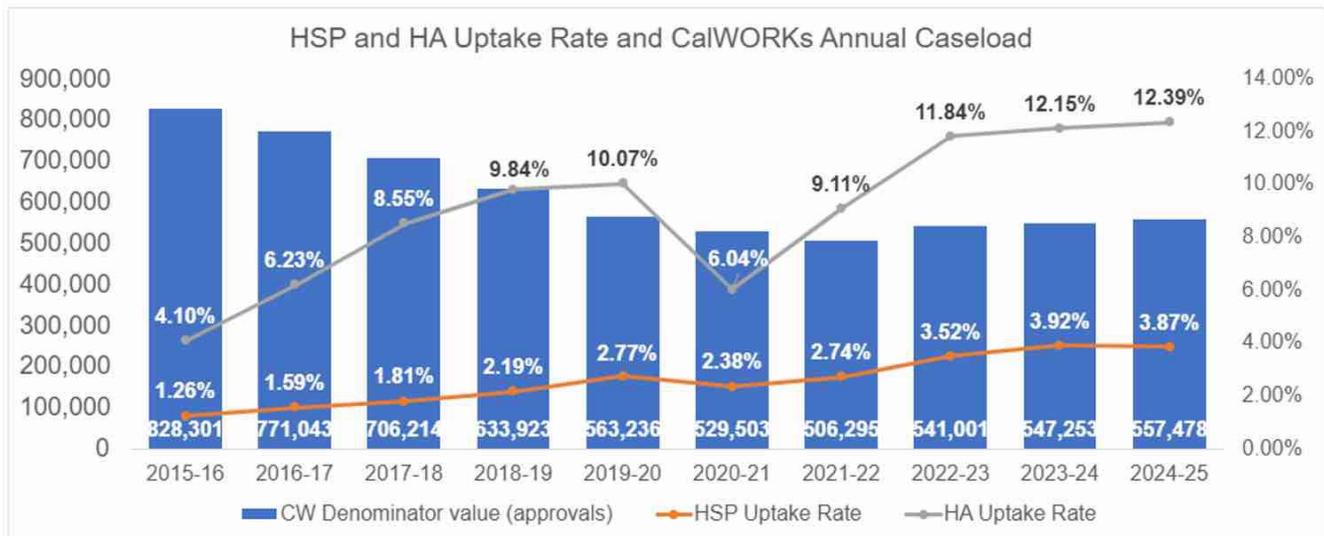
Program Funding	Spent Less than 70%	Spent 70-99%	Exhausted All Funding
Combined FY 21/22 & FY 22/23 & FY 23/24 One-time and Ongoing	0 grantees	15 grantees	40 grantees
FY 24/25 Ongoing	30 grantees	19 grantees	4 grantees

Note: CDSS anticipates additional grantees will have fully exhausted as total expenditures are adjusted for final claims.

For HSP ongoing funds for 2025-26, 37 counties requested funding above their allocations outlined in ACWDL dated June 11, 2025 to better meet their local needs of families in CalWORKs at risk or experiencing homelessness.

The following chart is an update to one provided to the Subcommittee in 2025 on trends in housing and homelessness uptake compared to caseload.

Updated HSP and HA Uptake Rate and CalWORKs Annual Caseload



Please note that the CalWORKs caseload showed in this graph represents the total, unduplicated number of families served, which is different from the average monthly caseload that is often used for budget projections shared with LAO and the Legislature. Additionally, the 12.39 percent represents the total percent of the CalWORKs caseload that received HA versus the 15 percent reported that requested HA.

In general, families in need of CalWORKs assistance may face heightened risks of housing instability due to a lack of affordable housing, a constrained social safety net due to federal

actions, and rising costs of living. Counties report that an increasing number of families applying for CalWORKs are unstably housed and experience complex, overlapping challenges, underscoring the need for comprehensive, whole-family wraparound supports to promote stability and long-term well-being. Counties also note that ongoing services are often necessary to support families’ successful transitions from CalWORKs.

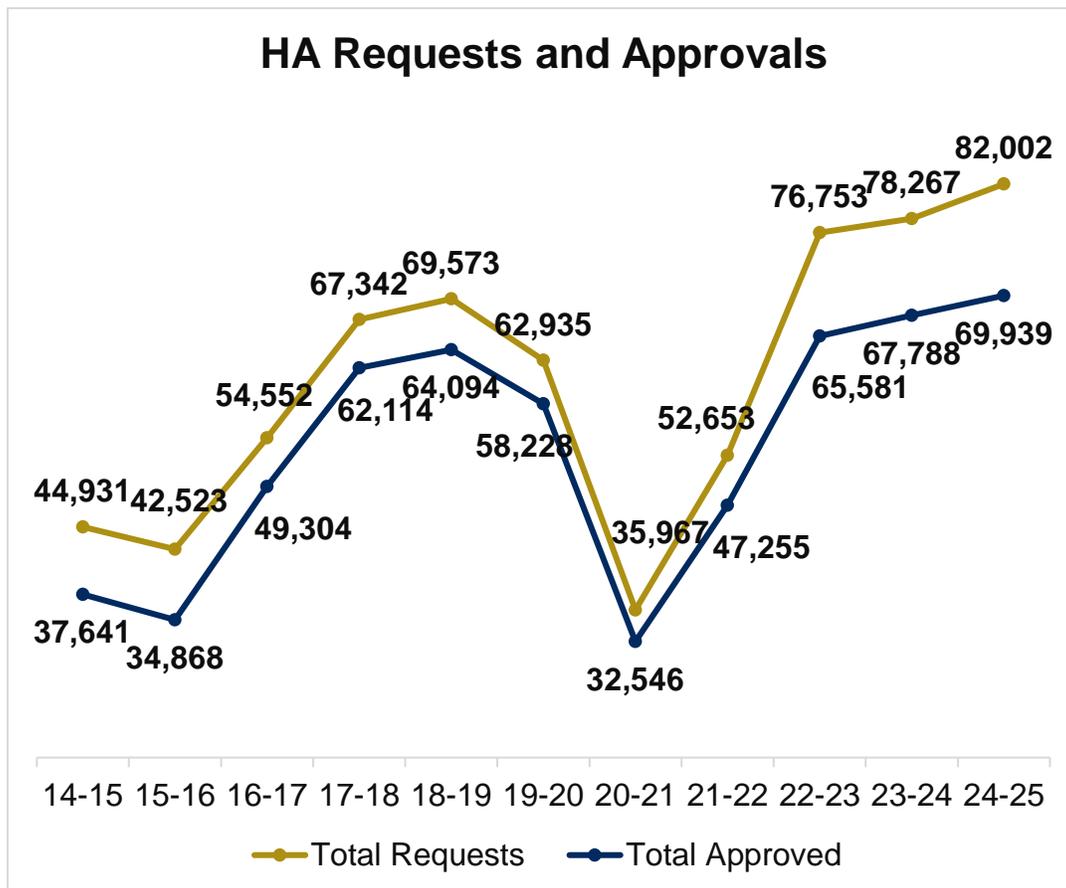
While there is some variability year over year, overall approvals for both permanent and temporary Housing Assistance (HA) have trended upward year over year since the COVID-19 pandemic. Approvals over the past three years have exceeded pre-pandemic levels. These trends likely reflect both increased housing need among families and improved access to HA resulting from legislative changes and other programmatic efforts.

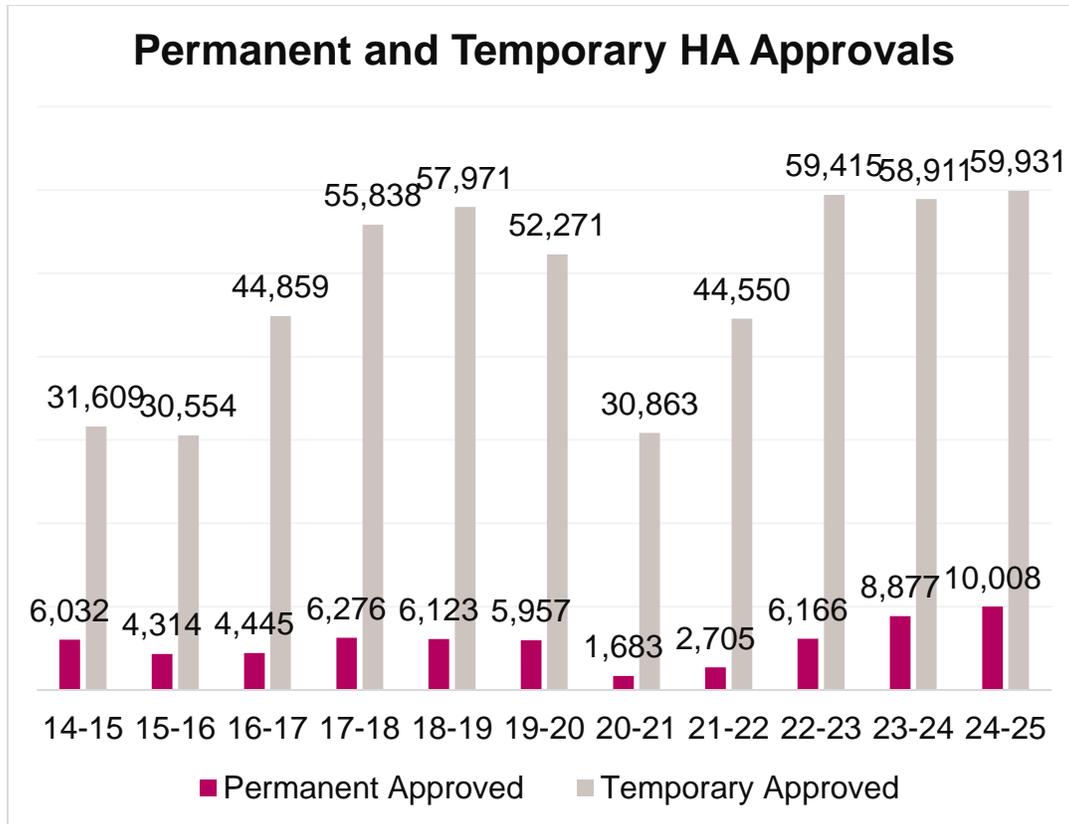
CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program Caseload:

In FY 2024-25:

Over 59,900 families were approved for temporary HA

Over 10,000 families were approved for permanent HA





Similar to HA, both requests and approvals for the CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) increased in 2024-25. Requests for HSP increased from 22,674 families in 2023-24 to 23,072 families in 2024-25. More than 14,500 families were approved for assistance (i.e. newly enrolled in HSP) in 2024-25, approximately 1,700 more families than in the prior year.

Despite some counties exhausting available HSP funds, approvals continued to increase in 2024-25 due to several factors. Counties that exhausted funding tended to be smaller jurisdictions; redistribution of funds in summer 2024 and the one-time six month extension of the expenditure deadline enabled many counties that would have had to wind down their program to continue providing services; and some counties managed limited resources by scaling back the level or duration of assistance provided to families, such as offering fewer months of rental subsidies. Additionally, some counties used HSP to support families who otherwise would have been served by Bringing Families Home (BFH) after that program closed.

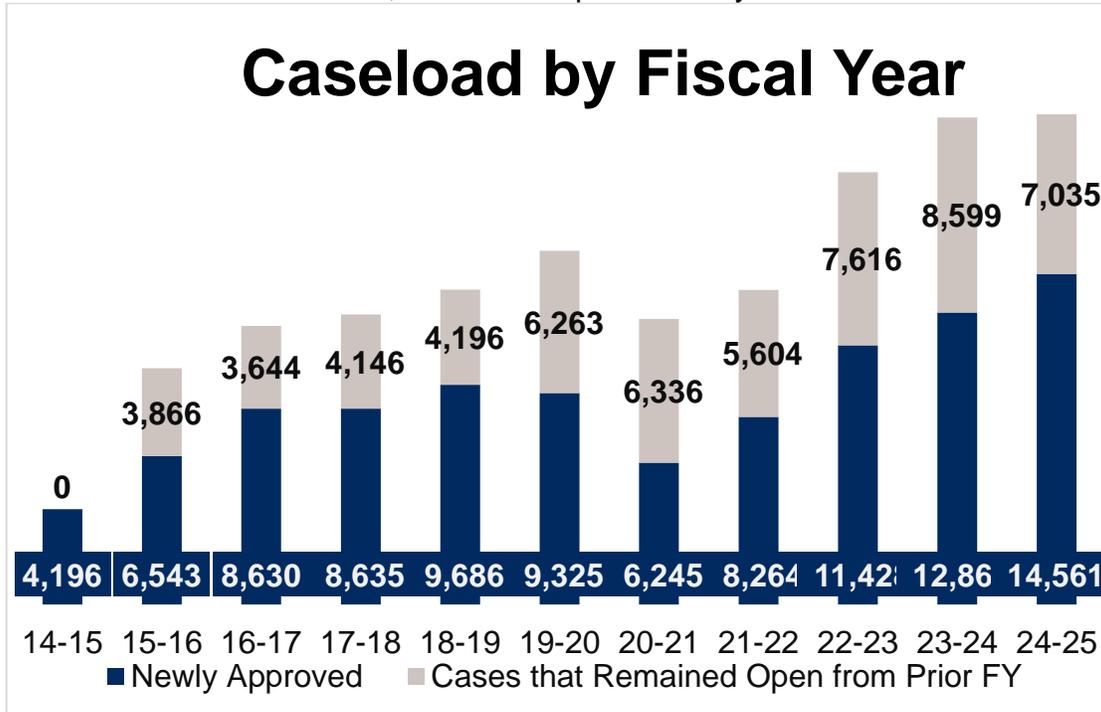
Demand for HSP is expected to remain elevated as families continue to face a persistent housing affordability crisis and communities experience reductions in other homelessness assistance funding. The Budget Act of 2025 did not include additional one-time funding augmentations for HSP. As funding returns to baseline, CDSS and county projections indicate that in 2025-26, HSP will be able to serve around 10,000 to 11,000 families with the remaining funding, which would represent a 30 to 40% decrease in caseload compared to 2024-25. Grantees have indicated they will be or already have modified program operations in the following ways:

- Limited to no emergency housing/hotel assistance,

- Pausing new enrollments or significantly reducing the number of participants they can serve,
- Offering a more limited range of supports, including a shorter timeframe for monthly rental subsidies and a lower rate of financial assistance.

CalWORKs Housing Support Program Caseload

Since program launch in 2014 to June 2025:
 Over 100,300 families served
 Over 51,700 families permanently housed



Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ Please describe the people served in the program (annual income maximum, average number of children, age, race, gender, educational level) and what barriers do these families face?
- ◇ How does a family apply for the program, what is required of them due to federal and state law, and what is the denial rate (and what trends have been seen in this)?
- ◇ How does CalWORKs impact children in the assistance unit (e.g. preserving basic health and safety and keeping children with their families)?
- ◇ What have been the trends in the CalWORKs-related housing programs?
- ◇ What is the rate of homelessness and housing needs in the CalWORKs caseload?

Panel:

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Michael Maniglia, Deputy Director, Self-Sufficiency Division, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
- Yesenia Robancho, Associate Director of Policy and Strategy, End Child Poverty California powered by GRACE
- Ryan Woolsey, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

CDSS has very helpfully provided the rate of homelessness for CalWORKs applicants, however the rate of homelessness and housing instability looking at the whole caseload remains unknown as a trackable percentage. The continuing increase in utilization of housing and homelessness programs suggests increasing housing instability in the CalWORKs caseload. Family homelessness, and its lasting traumatic impacts on children in particular, is a profound and extremely concerning reality for the CalWORKs caseload. The more that can be understood about the incidence of housing instability and homelessness for the CalWORKs caseload helps to inform the overall understanding of what these families – families with children for whom preserving family stability and avoiding entrance into the child welfare system is primary – are facing in daily life.

Staff Recommendation:

The Chair and Subcommittee may wish to request assistance from the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) in drafting proposed trailer bill language to require the reporting of trackable and comprehensive information on housing instability and homelessness across the CalWORKs caseload. The LAO can work with the Subcommittee staff on timing and approach after this hearing.

This and all CalWORKs issues will be held open.

Issue 8: Immigration Services Programs Overview and Underserved Regions of the State

The Governor’s Budget maintains \$63.5 million General Fund in 2026-27 for immigration services.

Immigration Services Funding	\$43.666 million
Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Immigration Services	\$10 million
California State University (CSU) Immigration Legal Services	\$7 million
Youth Legal Services	\$2.9 million

The following information was provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in response to a request for an update on funding and expenditures in these programs and for the Children’s Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP).

Immigration Services Funding (also called “One California”). The 2024-25 Special Legislative Session provided \$10 million General Fund, which was allocated to the Youth Legal Services and Detained Representation Project for services through June 30, 2027. In 2024-24, CDSS awarded \$10 million to removal defense (RD) services. In 2025-26, allocated \$15 million for One California/Immigration Services. \$1 million is directed to the Detained Representation Project (DRP), specifically for individuals in detention and \$14 million was directed to the Removal Defense program for services to individuals currently in detention or facing removal proceedings. This augmentation brings the RD program to \$16 million per year as of January 2026.

As of December 2025, 50 percent of the baseline \$10 million funds has been expended which is on track to full expenditure. CDSS allocates RD and DRP funding statewide using a population-based methodology. Using the most recent Census Bureau data, CDSS estimates California’s immigration population by region and allocates funding proportionally. This approach is intended to ensure that regions with larger immigrant communities receive a proportional share of statewide funding.

To help ensure fair funding for rural communities, CDSS has awarded rural regions 100% of their request. This funding is available for expenditure in this current and next state fiscal year, through June 30, 2027. As of September 2025, 1,577 clients were served in the removal defense program and 118 clients were served in the detained representation project.

Children’s Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP). The 2025-26 Budget Act awarded the CHIRP \$10 million, and CDSS amended the program in July 2025 to extend services through June 30, 2026. As of September 30, 2025, Acacia reported \$1,701,387.44 (17%) of expenses. As of November 30, 2025, 835 people have been served in the current service term. Based on this current trajectory, CDSS anticipates needing an extension for time to expend these funds and may process a no-cost extension to the grant. The Department closed out the prior service period and \$2,833,609.40 was recouped due to partners’ under-expenditure of 2024-25 grant funds. 914 people were served in the prior iteration.

Stakeholder Requests. Stakeholders are requesting \$50 million General Fund for Immigration Legal Services in 2026-27. Stakeholders are requesting \$15 million General Fund to maintain CHIRP for another year and expand capacity.

Panel

Questions for the Panel:

- ◇ How have recent appropriations for ISF and other immigration programs been spent?
- ◇ How much more is needed in the ISF to meet service provider/client needs?
- ◇ Where are underserved areas and how can we bolster their capacity?
- ◇ What is the status of CHIRP spending and what is needed to continue CHIRP in 2026-27?

Panel:

- Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
- Eliana Kaimowitz, Director Office of Equity, California Department of Social Services
- Luz Gallegos, Executive Director, TODEC Legal Center (Inland Empire)
- Bruno Huizar, Supervising Policy Manager, Detention and Deportation, California Immigrant Policy Center
- Jackie Gonzalez, Co-Executive Director, Immigrant Defense Advocates (IDA)
- Juwan Trotter, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Lourdes Morales, Assistant Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

Please see the staff recommendation below.

Staff Recommendation:

The Chair and Subcommittee may wish to ask for an updated estimate on (1) the additional funds (General Fund) that could be utilized by Immigration Services Funding program partners to meet demands in the community in the 2026-27 budget year and (2) how much is needed to continue services for CHIRP. In addition, given the testimony on underserved areas, the Administration could be asked to provide its feedback, on a technical assistance basis, on how much funding could be utilized to make a difference in capacity-building for these regions. This feedback could be requested by March 25, 2026.

In the meantime, these issues will be held open.

Issue 9: Guaranteed Income Pilot Program Implementation and Evaluation Update

AB 153 (Chapter 86, Statutes of 2021) established the Guaranteed Income (GI) Pilot Program. The 2021 Budget Act included \$35 million General Fund, available over five years, for the pilot program. CDSS awarded funding to seven local grantees to provide unconditional, regular monthly payments to pregnant individuals and youth exiting extended foster care at or after 21 years of age. These were the two categories for recipients set in the statute that authorized the program.

As of October 2024, the seven CDSS-funded pilot programs across California's major regions (all grantees) have completed enrollment, offering guaranteed income payments of \$600 to \$1,200 per month to nearly 2,000 individuals (as mentioned, former foster youth and pregnant people). These payments will continue through April 2026, supporting participants for 12 to 18 months.

The CDSS anticipates a final evaluation report for this program by the summer of 2030. The evaluation will examine the impact of the payments on health, financial well-being, housing security, food security, participation in benefits, employment, and education. Thus far, participants in focus groups appreciated the low-burden application process (application takes around 15 minutes). About one-third of applicants experience homelessness at baseline.

Guaranteed Income for Older Adults. As part of the 2024 Budget Act, CDSS received an additional \$5 million to expand the Guaranteed Income Pilot Program to include older adults as a priority population. This augmentation will serve adults 60 or older who are either eligible for or receiving a means-tested benefit. CDSS reports that it has issued an Intent to Award letter to GiveDirectly as the service provider, and that the department is currently finalizing the grant agreement. GiveDirectly selected the Housing Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania as the program evaluator. This Pilot will serve 240 older adults living in San Joaquin County with payments beginning summer 2026.

Panel**Questions for the Panel:**

- ◇ What is the status of the Guaranteed Income Pilot Program (GIPP), including the \$5 million provided for seniors in the 2024 Budget?
- ◇ What is the status of the evaluation and when will it be complete and available?
- ◇ If the evaluation is expected summer of 2030, please explain the activities that justify this delay between now and then?
- ◇ What is known so far about the outcomes of guaranteed income for individuals, families, and communities?

Panel:

- Alexis Fernandez Garcia, Deputy Director Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, California Department of Social Services
- Juwan Trotter, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst’s Office
- Noelle Fa-Kaji, Staff Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

Staff Comments

Please see the staff recommendation below.

Staff Recommendation:

The Chair and Subcommittee may wish to ask for an interim or preliminary evaluation to be submitted to the Legislature by a sooner date than June 30, 2030.

In the meantime, these issues will be held open.

Non-Presentation Items

The following proposals do not require a formal presentation from the Administration, allowing the Subcommittee to focus time in the hearing on the most significant issues. Members of the Subcommittee may ask questions, make comments, or request a presentation by the Administration on these proposals, at the discretion of the Subcommittee Chair. Members of the public can provide public comment on these items during the Public Comment period, after discussion on the issues to be heard has concluded.

5180 Department of Social Services

Issue 10: Related Governor's Budget Change Proposals (BCPs)

- ◇ CalFresh Enhanced Monitoring to Achieve Federal Compliance and Avoid Fiscal Sanctions BCP
- ◇ CalFresh Higher Education (AB 79) BCP
- ◇ Food Assistance: Disaster Utilities (AB 777) BCP

A description of each of these proposals in the Governor's Budget is included here. Please see the [Department of Finance's website for more detailed information.](#)

CalFresh Enhanced Monitoring to Achieve Federal Compliance and Avoid Fiscal Sanctions BCP – Requests \$4,812,000 (\$3,309,000 General Fund, \$1,503,000 Federal Fund) in fiscal year 2026-27 and \$4,703,000 (\$3,446,000 General Fund, \$1,257,000 Federal Fund) in 2027-28 and ongoing to support 18.0 permanent positions and the equivalent of 3.0 positions for Family Engagement and Empowerment Division (FEED) programs. These resources will support increased compliance monitoring and implementation of stricter work requirements from the federal Administration.

Public Social Services: CalFresh Higher Education (AB 79) BCP – Requests \$219,000 (\$161,000 General Fund) in fiscal year 2026-27 and \$213,000 (\$156,000 General Fund) in 2027-28 and ongoing to support one (1.0) permanent position to implement CalFresh Higher Education (AB 79).

Food Assistance: Disasters Utilities (AB 777) BCP – Requests \$248,000 (\$168,000 General Fund) in fiscal year 2026-27 and \$242,000 (\$179,000 General Fund) in 2027-28 and ongoing for the equivalent of 1.0 positions to analyze and report aggregate data for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) to support timely, automated mass benefit replacements in response to a declared disaster and contribute empirical strategies to maximize all available food assistance during declared disasters as required by AB 777.

Staff Comments

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 11: Related Governor’s Trailer Bill Language (TBL) Proposals

Consecutive Recovery of CalFresh and CFAP Overissuances TBL. Existing state law requires overissuance claims for CalFresh to be reduced in accordance with WIC section 18927. This proposal, starting October 1, 2027, updates overissuance statute and allows for the consecutive recovery of claims for ongoing households containing both CalFresh and CFAP members: first from CalFresh, then from CFAP. This change would ensure equitable treatment and avoiding compounding monthly benefit reductions for mixed program households. This proposal is not contingent on CFAP Expansion and is needed once CFAP is no longer linked to the federal bank account. There is no fiscal impact of this proposal.

Disaster CalFresh and Waiver Requirements TBL. Existing state law requires the CDSS to request authorization to operate Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) and subsequent emergency response waivers when there is a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration with Individual Assistance. This proposal updates these requirements to instead allow CDSS and the disaster impacted counties to collaborate and determine whether D-CalFresh is part of an appropriate response given the unique impacts of the disaster. There is no fiscal impact of this proposal. This issue is also included under Issue 1, where questions from the Subcommittee are noted.

Staff Comments

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 12: Holocaust Survivors Assistance Program

The 2025 Budget included \$14.5 million General Fund for the Holocaust Survivors Assistance Program (HSAP). This funding has been dispersed as grants to seven grantees who serve Holocaust Survivors. CDSS anticipate all the funding will be expended by the end of the current fiscal year.

The HSAP provides specialized services to Holocaust survivors and their caregivers to help them remain independent and safe in their communities. The funds are issued as grants to organizations that provide special services to Holocaust Survivors. These services may include companion or personal care services, home health care, culturally appropriate case management, food and nutrition, financial assistance toward dental care cost, housing related supports, and or socialization programs.

The following information is from the interim expenditure reports submitted by grantees in March 2024:

- From January to December 2023, grantees served 1,697 survivors with \$14.3 million in funding.
- From January 2024 to June 2025, grantees are projected to serve 1,831 survivors with \$21.7 million in funding.

Please note, the 1,697 and 1,831 are not unique survivors; they can be represented in both counts.

Stakeholders are requesting \$36 million in 2026-27, to be used over a three-year period, for the HSAP.

Staff Comments

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

Issue 13: Immigration Counsel Access Pilot

The Subcommittee is in receipt of a letter from Assemblymember Liz Ortega requesting a one-time \$5 million appropriation in 2026-27 for the Immigration Counsel Access Pilot, a critical statewide initiative aimed at ensuring a basic standard of due process for unrepresented individuals navigating our state's complex court systems.

This funding would establish a model of court-based legal access that can be replicated across California. The current political climate has made access to counsel for immigrants undeniably dire, as the federal administration's aggressive and unlawful enforcement tactics directly undermine the ability to secure due process. The expanded use of mass arrests and indiscriminate detention, often targeting individuals who are simply attending their court hearings, funnels vulnerable people into remote detention facilities, making communication with and access to a lawyer nearly impossible.

Furthermore, the systematic deployment of expedited removal and the dismissal of pending cases, often followed immediately by arrest at the courthouse, deliberately bypasses the immigration court system and strips individuals of the necessary time, opportunity, and legal safeguards to find an attorney and defend their rights before a judge. This practice transforms routine legal appearances into traps for immediate, fast-tracked deportation, leaving hundreds of Californians in prolonged detention. For many, a habeas corpus petition, a legal filing in which a person asks a federal court to review the lawfulness of their detention by the government, has become the only viable legal pathway to freedom.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS), or another suitable administrative agency, shall establish and administer this pilot program, initially operating in the high-need court locations of Sacramento and Concord. The pilot will serve as a model for expansion statewide. This program is structured to maximize limited resources by utilizing an organized screening and referral system. It will contract with nonprofit legal service providers or eligible public defender offices to deliver the following essential services:

- **Legal Screenings and Consultations:** Providing comprehensive legal screenings for individuals in or facing proceedings.
- **Detention Support:** Providing emergency assistance to secure the release of individuals from detention including the coordination of habeas filings or bond representation.
- **Assistance with Limited-Scope Filings:** Providing targeted legal assistance for specific aspects of a case, including but not limited to document preparation and assistance with filings.
- **Court Support:** Implementing an Attorney of the Day (AOD) model to assist unrepresented individuals in understanding their matters, completing intake forms, and preparing for subsequent hearings.
- **Referrals and Case Placement:** Coordinating referrals and case placement for individuals eligible for full-scope representation through regional referral systems to maximize efficiency and reduce duplication of effort.

- Attorney Training & Mentorship: Providing targeted mentorship from experienced habeas practitioners, including federal court practice guidance, templates, and sample pleadings.
- Funding Request.

This initial investment will allow the state to:

1. Establish the AOD model in the two high-need court locations of Concord and Sacramento.
2. Develop regional coordination and referral systems to strengthen pathways between limited-scope and full-scope providers.
3. Collect and analyze data on program implementation and outcomes, including the number of individuals served and case outcomes, in preparation for a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2028, on the program’s effectiveness and recommendations for permanent statewide implementation.

Staff Comments

Staff Recommendation: Hold open.

This agenda and other publications are available on the Assembly Budget Committee’s website at: [Sub 2 Hearing Agendas | California State Assembly](#). You may contact the Committee at (916) 319-2099. This agenda was prepared by Nicole Vazquez.