



## SB 1077 (Gonzalez) CalFresh & Federal Shutdowns

### SUMMARY

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Senate Bill (SB) 1077 will require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop a strategic communications plan in response to federal shutdowns that disrupt the disbursement of CalFresh benefits.

It will also require CDSS to develop the capacity to disburse state-funded benefits to CalFresh recipients during a federal shutdown that results in interruptions to benefit disbursement.

### EXISTING LAW

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Federal law (Chapter 51, (commencing with Section 2011), Title 7, United States Code) establishes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, which provides federally funded nutrition benefits to over 5 million Californians.

Existing state law requires CDSS to offer training to county human services agencies on Disaster CalFresh and maintain updated Disaster CalFresh materials, including an internet website and outreach flyer (WIC §18917).

### BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

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Over 5 million low-income Californians rely on CalFresh benefits, which are federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).<sup>1</sup> CalFresh is the state's

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4971>

largest anti-hunger and anti-poverty program, and every dollar in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.54 or more in local economic activity, supporting jobs and bolstering the incomes of local farmers.<sup>2</sup>

Despite SNAP being a mandatory payment program not subject to discretionary annual appropriations, USDA has historically treated it as dependent on annual appropriations. As a result, failure to pass the USDA budget for the federal fiscal year places issuance of SNAP benefits at risk.

On October 1, 2025, the federal government shut down for a record 43 days. During the shutdown, the Food and Nutrition Service announced there would not be sufficient funds to pay full benefits for the next month, and suspended benefits for November 2025.

Due to the unprecedented nature of this disruption in benefits, CDSS, counties, and other stakeholders had to develop communications to the 5 million impacted recipients rapidly – a task made even more challenging as concurrent litigation and court decisions changed the availability of benefits and the timeline for disbursement.

In addition, California does not currently have the infrastructure or capacity necessary to issue state-funded benefits to CalFresh recipients during a federal shutdown. This means that if the state had decided to appropriate funds to replace SNAP benefits before low-income

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistanceprogram-snap/economic-linkages/>

individuals were directly affected, it couldn't. This lack of capacity leaves the state vulnerable to decisions made at the federal level, particularly as the federal administration targets California's public benefit programs and as federal shutdowns become more common.

## **SOLUTION**

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SB 1077 will prepare California for potential future shutdowns by requiring CDSS to create a strategic communications plan, including a webpage with updates on the status of CalFresh benefits, a "Frequently Asked Questions" page addressing questions and misinformation, information on resources like food banks, and regular communications and briefings for impacted recipients and stakeholders.

In addition, SB 1077 will require CDSS to create a mechanism for disbursing state-funded benefits to CalFresh recipients if a future federal shutdown impacts the disbursement of these benefits. The bill does not require the state to pay benefits during a federal shutdown, but it does require the creation of the infrastructure necessary to provide state-funded benefits on an emergency basis if the legislature appropriates funding for this purpose.

These measures will provide California with more flexibility to respond to emergencies created by the federal government and provide more certainty and continuity of benefits to the low-income Californians that rely on CalFresh.

## **SUPPORT**

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End Child Poverty CA (co-sponsor)  
Western Center for Law and Poverty (co-sponsor)  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Grocers Association  
County Welfare Directors Association of California  
League of California Cities

## **CONTACT**

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