



CONSENT CALENDAR

April 29, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Lunaparra (Author), Councilmembers Humbert (Co-Sponsor), Councilmembers Bartlett (Co-Sponsor), Mayor Ishii (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Resolution Supporting a State Budget Request for the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Program and Endorsing AB 936 (CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Program)

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution supporting a State Budget Request to reinstate CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Program and endorsing AB 936

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Program was forced to shut down on January 31, 2025, due to a depletion of its funding. As a result, families experiencing food insecurity are no longer able to receive up to \$60 in rebates to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with their CalFresh benefits. Since its inception in 2023, the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Program has been successful in subsidizing fresh fruit and vegetables to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, making fresh and nutritious food more affordable. Research has shown that communities with limited access to fresh produce experience increased risk for chronic diseases, emphasizing the critical need for this program.

In response, Assemblymember Alex Lee submitted a budget request for \$63 million for one-time funding from the State to restart the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Program (previously referred to as the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project). This funding would allow the program to operate continuously for 12 months and expand its reach, doubling the number of households it serves each month to a total of 111,000 households statewide, making healthy food more affordable for those in need. The budget request has been endorsed by a coalition of over 60 state and local organizations with an interest in promoting healthy food access.

Additionally, Assemblymember Lee introduced AB 936, which would help make the pilot program permanent and modify its framework to allow the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Program to expand its reach to additional retail locations, allowing more families across the state to participate.

This resolution supports both the budget request and AB 936, which jointly facilitate the ongoing operations of the program.

BACKGROUND

The California Association of Foodbanks cites that as of September 2024, 22% of California households and 27% of California households with children face food insecurity, making this program crucial for reducing hardship and improving access to nutritious food for low-income residents of the state.¹ Subsidizing nutritious fruit and vegetables ensures that individuals, especially those facing financial barriers, have access to affordable, nutritious options, improving public health and reducing healthcare costs in the long term.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

A one-time allocation of \$63 million from the state's general fund would enable the program to operate for a full year, effectively doubling its impact and expanding its reach to more retailers across California. With sufficient funding from the state budget, the program can continue to combat hunger and promote better health for CalFresh participants statewide.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

No fiscal impacts of the recommendation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This recommendation is not expected to have any impacts on the city's environmental sustainability.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Cecilia Lunaparra, 510-981-7170
Jonah Gottlieb, Chief of Staff

¹ <https://www.cafoodbanks.org/hunger-data-reports/>

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

SUPPORTING A STATE BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE CALFRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE EBT PROGRAM AND ENDORSING AB 936 (CALFRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFITS PROGRAM)

WHEREAS, the CalFresh Fruit & Vegetable EBT Program was forced to shut down on January 31, 2025, due to a depletion of its funding; and

WHEREAS, as a result, families experiencing food insecurity have decreased access to nutritious food; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Alex Lee submitted a budget request for \$63 million to revitalize the CalFresh Fruit & Vegetable EBT Program; and

WHEREAS, the budget request has been endorsed by over 60 state and local organizations with an interest in promoting healthy food access; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Lee also introduced AB 936, which would help make the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project permanent and modify its framework to allow the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Program to expand its reach to additional retail locations, allowing more families across the state to participate; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley is committed to supporting those experiencing food insecurity, as evidenced by its investment in local food banks and nonprofits that provide hot meals to individuals in our city; and

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, that the Berkeley City Council hereby declares its support for the \$63 million state budget request to ensure wider access to nutritious fruits and vegetables for those in need; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley City Council hereby declares its support for AB 936 to make the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project permanent; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that upon passage, a copy of this Resolution be sent to Governor Gavin Newsom, State Senator Jesse Arreguín, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Assemblymember Alex Lee.

