



Policy Agenda 2021

Vision: *A hunger-free community*

Mission: *Lead our community to ensure that anyone who needs a healthy meal can get one*

Policy Principles:

Access to healthy food is a human right.

Food is foundational to economic health and stability.

All children should receive free school meals.

Free school meals create equity and community by ensuring that every student has the nutrition they need to learn and thrive. In turbulent times, universal school meals also ensure that school is a place where communities are created, not divided.

Policies should be evaluated for their impact on diversity, equity & inclusion.

Systemic racism is embedded in many long-standing policies and programs. Now is the time to ensure that we are employing an equity lens when adopting or adjusting policies. We are committed to systems thinking policies and practices that promote racial and ethnic diversity and provide equity and inclusion for people from all different backgrounds and life experiences.

School & Summer Meals:

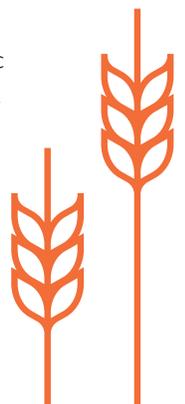
School meals ensure that every child gets the best start on life and learning. Work can be done at the National, State and County levels to improve every child's access to school meals. At the federal level, Child Nutrition reauthorization is a vehicle to greatly improve these programs nationwide.

- **Universal School Meals:** School meals ensure that every child gets the best start on life and learning and are a crucial part of building community. Work can be done at all levels of government to improve every child's access to school meals.
- **California State Support of Universal School Meals:** In the 2020 legislative session, Second Harvest was a co-sponsor of Assemblymember Berman's bill to fill financial gaps, allowing more schools to take advantage of federal universal meals programs. Our advocacy has helped bring the issue to the forefront and we are working with our representatives and policy partners to ensure major State investments in universal meals programs in the upcoming session. Small financial gaps can be filled to operate these programs, drawing down more federal dollars (as much as a 1:10 ratio) while feeding more kids.
- **County Support of Universal School Meals:** With the partnership and financial support of our County governments and Offices of Education, Second Harvest has supported the enrollment of 63 schools in 13 school districts in universal meals programs. This means over 19,000 children will receive free meals at schools.
- **Summer EBT:** Access to summer meals has always been challenging, given that they can only be offered in very specific areas, at certain times. USDA should expand the use of Summer EBT nationwide. During COVID-19, Congress authorized Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) which provided money on debit cards to families whose children were missing school meals. This experiment proved that accessibility to food over the summer can be increased through the combination of traditional summer meals programs and innovative efforts like Summer EBT.

Bill to Watch:

- **SB 364 (Skinner):**
School Meals for All

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) / Known as CalFresh in California:

SNAP is a systemic answer to food insecurity. For every meal provided by food banks, nine are provided through SNAP. SNAP needs to be strengthened and made more accessible at both the State and National level.

- **Increase Benefits:** Increase SNAP benefits by 15% permanently. Benefits run out before the end of the month for too many families, leaving them hungry or relying on food banks.
- **Realistic Food Plan Costs:** Link benefits to the 'low-cost food plan' rather than the 'thrifty food plan'. This plan reflects more realistic costs for food and updating this method of paying benefits is long overdue.
- **Inclusion:** A tool this important should be available to all. States should not be allowed to exclude participants, such as those returning from incarceration.
- **Access:** Require states to offer options to access benefits online, in person, and by phone. Improve options for on-line ordering and delivery.

Support of Food Banks:

Support at the National and State level for food banks in the form of financial support and healthy food is crucial, particularly in protracted times of emergency and natural disasters. Strong networks of food banks exist nationally, and for most efficient provision to our communities of need, support should flow through these networks.

- **National Support:** The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a crucial source of food and funding for food banks nationwide and should be funded at 2020 levels. Efforts should also be made to reduce reporting and ensure that these USDA foods can get to the community quickly and easily.
- **State Support:** California's support of food banks through CalFood and Emergency Funding is crucial to keep the network strong. Governor Newsom's 2021-22 State Budget allocates \$8M in CalFood and \$30M for emergency funding. We advocate that an additional \$110M be allocated for fiscal 2022 as well as a one-time \$32M investment for Disaster & Climate Resilience, given the increased need and protracted economic impact of the pandemic.

Food Rescue:

Capturing high-quality food to feed our communities is a crucial priority for Second Harvest. As leaders in food rescue, we are active in the implementation of SB 1383 which will require major food generators to donate more surplus, quality food. We are committed to providing more diverse food sources to our clients while doing our part to reduce greenhouse gases.

- **Capacity & Infrastructure:** CalRecycle needs to continue investment in capacity and infrastructure for food banks.
- **Partnership & Cost Recovery Models:** Second Harvest will partner closely with our counties and cities for financial support and appropriate legislation to support cost-recovery models that ensure that food rescue can be a positive for both low-income people and the environment.

Bills & Administrative Actions to Watch:

- **SB 107 (Weiner):** Simplified applications for seniors and those with disabilities
- **SB 108 (Hurtado):** Every human being has the right to access sufficient healthy food
- **AB 221 (Santiago):** Emergency food benefits for immigrants excluded from federal aid
- **SB 464 (Hurtado) Food4All!** Modernize the California Food Assistance Program to provide essential nutrition assistance to California immigrants who are ineligible for CalFresh solely due to their immigration status.
- **Double-Up Food Bucks added to EBT:** Implementation that increases access to fresh produce

Bill to Watch:

- **SB 240 (Eggman) Farm to Food Bank Tax Credit:** to support farmers and reduce food waste by extending the tax credit that otherwise expires December 2021, for California grown produce, proteins, and other healthy foods.

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