



## Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7  
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**REVISED #47**  
**CONSENT CALENDAR**  
July, 14 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington  
Subject: Address the Underutilization of CalFresh in Alameda County and in the City of Berkeley and Send a Letter to the Alameda County Administrator

### RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to the Alameda County Administrator to increase outreach efforts in an attempt to increase the Utilization of CalFresh in Alameda County and in the City of Berkeley.

### BACKGROUND

CalFresh otherwise known as the Supplemental Nutrition Associate Program (SNAP) aims to help provide healthy food with highly nutritious value to the table. However, California has one of the lowest participation rates of all states in the federally-funded food assistance program. Recently, the Contra Costa Grand Jury found that Contra Costa County residents are missing out on more than \$54 million annually in federal food subsidies. The Grand Jury listed numerous suggestions to both cities and the counties on how better to increase utilization of the CalFresh program.

The City of Berkeley shares deep concerns regarding the underutilization of CalFresh by City and Alameda County residents. We appreciate all that Alameda County has done, past and present, to benefit low income residents. However, there is undoubtedly more progress to be made in order to ensure eligible residents in Berkeley as well as the greater community of the county of Alameda have the opportunity they deserve to access healthy food at a reasonable price. To address this issue, we would like to partner with Alameda County and coalesce in efforts to alleviate underutilization and increase business and resident participation.

We urge you to consider the recommendations of the Contra Costa County Grand Jury to address the underutilization of the CalFresh program by increasing outreach efforts to those that are potentially eligible, directly impacting low income residents in our community.

For more information see: <http://tinyurl.com/CalFreshReport>

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Additional funds allocated to residents. If residents receive CalFresh money and use it in City and Alameda County stores, individual families, businesses, and the City will benefit from the consumer spending.

ENVIROMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:

Consistent with Berkeley's Environmental Sustainability Goals and no negative impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Kriss Worthington 510-981-7170

Attachment:

Letter to Alameda County Administrator Susan S. Muranishi re: Increasing Utilization of CalFresh in Alameda County

Susan Muranishi  
County Administrator  
1221 Oak Street, Room 555  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Susan Muranishi,

The City of Berkeley is writing to you to share our deep concerns about our residents' underutilization of CalFresh. We understand that there is a similar underutilization issue occurring throughout Alameda County and we would like to partner with you on this issue to find ways the City and County can work together to alleviate the issue and increase participation. We urge you to consider the recommendations of the Contra Costa County Grand Jury addressing the underutilization of CalFresh. The recommendations could work to increase participation in the CalFresh program by increasing outreach efforts to those that are potentially eligible.

We appreciate all that Alameda County has done, past and present, to benefit low income residents. However, not all residents of the City of Berkeley, as well as the greater community of Alameda County are participating in this excellent program. Therefore, we would like to continue making progress to ensure everyone eligible, has the equal opportunity to access affordable healthy food. We are sharing these recommendations put forth by the Contra Costa Grand Jury in hopes to increase participation in CalFresh, directly impacting low income residents in our community.

According to the California CalFresh Outreach Plan for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015-2016, issued August 15, 2014, only 57% of California's eligible CalFresh participants actually received benefits as shown by the USDA statistics for FFY 2011; this was the second lowest participation rate amongst all 50 states.

Alameda County and the City of Berkeley should participate in the statewide objective of reaching 75% CalFresh participation by 2016. In order to reach the goal, the County and the City must increase both the number of new applications and the number of active ongoing cases. Outreach is the primary way to increase the number of new applications

Greater participation in food stamp programs is beneficial not only for participants, but for the County and the State as well; money recipients spend on food without the CalFresh funds can be spent on other taxable, nonfood items, thus generating revenue for local businesses and sales tax revenue for the local and state municipalities. .

Alameda County may have partially or completely implemented the following recommendations in the past, however, the urgency of this situation calls on us to re-examine all of these possibilities. The Contra Costa Grand Jury recommendations for Contra Costa County, which may be applicable to Alameda County on increasing the participation of CalFresh are as follows.

1. Work with Community-based organizations (CBO's)—who conduct general outreach work—soup kitchens, food pantries, and other food distribution sites to increase information about CalFresh availability.

2. Recommend Alameda County to participate in the California “Market Match” program, whereby \$10 from a CalFresh EBT card will purchase \$15 worth of tokens accepted by all vendors in the market.
3. Encourage Local Businesses that are represented by CalFresh to accept EBT cards on the basis of the benefits generating additional revenue and/or other local economic activity. Also encourage them to make CalFresh information, such as the “Myths and Facts” brochure, available to their customers.
4. Recommend the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Alameda County to educate their members about the opportunity of economic gain from by CalFresh. This could include informing their members—customers and business partners—that the brochures and applications are available in Spanish. Education specifically for members of the Latino community would be uniquely able to counter the myths about CalFresh applications endangering status of application for legal residency, etc.
5. Provide or coordinate with Health Fair/Health Screening events to offer opportunities for CalFresh representatives to reach the Latino Community and the Asian Pacific Islander Community.
6. Work with several libraries in Alameda County to have enrollment events where applications assistance and awareness of the CalFresh programs is available to residents.
7. Enable Alameda County to use a Cal Fresh restoration waiver, granting participants a grace period for recertification without requiring them to submit another application.
8. The County could organize an event to educate selected City Managers, Economic Development offices and local Chambers of Commerce representatives about (a) the economic gains to be realized from increased CalFresh participation, and (b) how to sponsor their own local enrollment events, after identifying funds to do so.
9. The County could recruit representatives of local businesses, such as business associations and/or Chambers of Commerce, area farmer markets, and cities with high concentrations of prospective CalFresh recipients for membership in the CalFresh Partner Group.
10. The County could issue a press release announcing May as CalFresh month emphasizing the economic gains for local businesses as a result of increased participation in the CalFresh program.
11. The County could extend CalFresh enrollment outreach to schools, senior centers, and senior housing, either directly or through the CalFresh Partners Group, after identifying funds to do so.

We look forward to working with you on any feasible ways the City of Berkeley and Alameda County can increase CalFresh participation.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council