

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 69

Introduced by Assembly Member Beall

December 15, 2010

An act to add Section 18924 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 69, as introduced, Beall. Senior nutrition benefits.

Existing federal law provides for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh (formerly the Food Stamp program), under which nutrition assistance benefits formerly referred to as food stamps, allocated to the state by the federal government, are distributed to eligible individuals by each county. Under existing law, the State Department of Social Services administers CalFresh at the state level, and has certain specified duties in that regard.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services to seek a federal waiver, demonstration project, or other authority to establish a pilot project in 2 areas of the state identified by the department utilizing existing information maintained by the Social Security Administration regarding low-income social security benefit recipients, and to more easily enroll eligible recipients into the CalFresh program. The bill would specify the department's duties in connection with establishment of the pilot project.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) Good nutrition is important for all Californians, especially
4 for seniors, who may suffer from diet-related diseases, may require
5 food with medication, or who are trying to maintain independence.

6 (b) The University of California at Los Angeles estimates that
7 approximately half a million older Californians living alone are
8 unable to make ends meet.

9 (c) Seniors on a fixed income find it difficult to afford nutritious
10 food.

11 (d) The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
12 (SNAP), administered in California as CalFresh, should help many
13 of these vulnerable seniors to meet their nutrition needs. However,
14 only 10 percent of eligible seniors in California participate in the
15 CalFresh program.

16 (e) In California, only 5 percent of social security recipients
17 eligible for CalFresh participate in the program.

18 (f) The federal Social Security Administration has information
19 that could help easily enroll eligible seniors for CalFresh benefits.
20 A partnership between the state and the Social Security
21 Administration to develop a more streamlined approach to enrolling
22 this population is needed.

23 (g) Many states have worked with the Social Security
24 Administration to establish Combined Application Projects (CAPs)
25 for other elderly populations, suggesting that similar action for
26 social security recipients may be successful.

27 (h) Enrolling more seniors into CalFresh not only draws more
28 federal nutrition benefits to California, but also stimulates the
29 economy. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates
30 that every dollar in SNAP benefits generates \$1.73 in economic
31 activity.

32 SEC. 2. Section 18924 is added to the Welfare and Institutions
33 Code, to read:

34 18924. (a) The department shall seek a federal waiver,
35 demonstration project, or other authority to establish a pilot project
36 utilizing existing information that the Social Security
37 Administration maintains regarding low-income social security

1 benefit recipients, to more easily enroll eligible recipients into the
2 CalFresh program administered pursuant to this chapter.

3 (b) In establishing the pilot project described in subdivision (a),
4 the department shall do all of the following:

5 (1) Identify two areas of the state in which to operate the pilot
6 project, in conjunction with local social security offices.

7 (2) Work with the Social Security Administration to develop
8 ways to target social security recipients eligible for CalFresh
9 benefits.

10 (3) Develop a streamlined application process for social security
11 recipients eligible for CalFresh, which, to the extent feasible, shall
12 be used to automatically or more easily enroll recipients of social
13 security, 65 years of age and older, whose incomes qualify them
14 for aid through the CalFresh program.

15 (4) Consider for implementation as a component of the pilot
16 project strategies used by other states to reduce paperwork and
17 increase federal nutrition benefits, including, but not limited to,
18 self-certification of key eligibility factors, standardization of
19 benefits and deductions, and automation of the application process.

20 (5) Consider other strategies to increase CalFresh participation
21 among existing eligible seniors.