

## Assembly Bill No. 69

### CHAPTER 502

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

[Approved by Governor October 5, 2011. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 6, 2011.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 69, 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, commencing July 1, 2012, would require the State Department of Social Services, to the extent permitted by federal law or other specified federal authority, to allow counties that satisfy certain criteria to simplify enrollment into CalFresh for potentially eligible low-income social security benefit recipients, utilizing existing information maintained by the Social Security Administration regarding these recipients. The bill would specify the department's duties in support of the enrollment efforts described in the bill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18924. (a) To the extent permitted by federal law, waiver, demonstration project, or other federal authority, the department shall allow counties to utilize existing information maintained by the federal Social Security Administration regarding low-income social security benefit recipients, to simplify enrollment into the CalFresh program administered pursuant to this chapter, provided that an interested county has either the existing capacity to receive that information, or the ability to adapt its existing automation systems without significant changes or costs to the state or county.

(b) The department shall support enrollment efforts pursuant to this section by doing all of the following:

(1) Working with the Social Security Administration to target social security recipients 60 years of age and older whose income and other factors are likely to qualify them for aid through CalFresh.

(2) Developing a streamlined application and simplified enrollment process for likely eligible recipients, which may include strategies used by other states to reduce paperwork and increase federal nutrition benefits, including, but not limited to, self-certification of key eligibility factors, standardization of benefits and deductions, and automation of the application process.

(3) Seeking waivers, grants, or other federal authority and support necessary to implement this section.

(c) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.