

# Assembly Bill No. 866

## Food Assistance to Young Adults in Foster Care

Assemblymember Blanca Rubio

### BACKGROUND

In recognition of the desperate need to better outcomes for foster youth, California passed AB 12 in 2010 to extend foster care up to age 21. The intent of the law, which took effect in 2012, was to ensure youth are provided a critical safety net prior to exiting foster care.

During their time in extended foster care, youth work toward increasing levels of independence. If they demonstrate readiness, they can reside in a Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP). Non-minors residing in SILPS receive their foster care payment directly so that they can pay their rent, utilities, etc. They also receive services and supports from the foster care system so that they may become more independent and take on more responsibility.

### ISSUE

Despite the changes in the law extending foster care up to 21, many of California's foster youth are struggling to meet their basic needs. One area of great concern is food security and food access.

A longitudinal study of extended foster care looked at a number of conditions of current and former foster youth at age 21. **The evaluators found that over 30% of youth still in foster care are classified as "food insecure."** One in four youth reported having to get food or borrow money for food from a friend or relative, and one in five reported skipping or cutting meals because they could not afford food. Nearly one in five reported having to forego paying off a bill to purchase food. One in ten reported not eating for an entire day because of a lack of money for food. *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of Youth at Age 21 (Mark E. Courtney et. al. 2018).*

A contributing factor to food insecurity is the way in which SILP payments are classified for purposes of CalFresh.

Currently, SILP payments made directly to non-minors in foster care are considered unearned income for eligibility determinations and payment amount. As a result, many young adults are deemed ineligible for CalFresh or are receiving very insignificant monthly benefits.

This is inconsistent with other programs, such as financial aid, where the SILP payment is not considered unearned income. In addition, for alternative placement types for non-minors, such as transitional housing, funding paid directly to the housing provider does not count as unearned income. <http://thpplus.org/wp2/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NMDs-CalFresh-FAQ-10-25-16.pdf>

### THIS BILL

To ensure non-minors in foster care have access to sufficient food, AB 866 would establish a food assistance program for nonminor dependents who receive their foster care benefits directly, and who therefore are at risk of not meeting the eligibility requirements for CalFresh. Under this bill, nonminor dependents would receive the equivalent of the maximum amount of CalFresh aid for a household of one. Parenting nonminor dependents would receive the equivalent of the maximum amount of CalFresh for their household size.

### SUPPORT

Children's Law Center of California (Co-Sponsor)  
Alliance for Children's Rights (Co-Sponsor)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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