



March 1, 2021

The Honorable Scott Wiener
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

RESB 107 (Wiener)

Dear Senator Wiener,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) writes in strong support of Senate Bill 107 would simplify CALFRESH applications for older adults 60 or over and people with disabilities.. CARA is California's largest grassroots advocacy organization, representing over 1 million members through our 300+ affiliated organizations.

SB 107 would, to the extent permitted by federal law, give an individual the option to apply, report, and recertify for CalFresh in person, by mail, online, or by telephone, and permit an individual to complete the interview requirement and client signature by telephone. The bill would also authorize counties to implement any method of telephonic or electronic signature that is supported by county business practice and technology.

SB 107 would require the department, with the input of stakeholders, to develop and execute a plan of support for counties that have not already implemented a telephone-based application and renewal process and to provide technical assistance and resources. The bill would require the application process to satisfy specified criteria, including simple, user-friendly language and instructions. The bill would require certain counties to comply with these provisions beginning on or before January 1, 2023, and require the remaining counties to comply with the provisions beginning on or before January 1, 2024. By imposing new duties on counties, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

COVID19 is exacerbating already high levels of hunger and hardship, particularly among older adults and people with disabilities. As our largest food and nutrition assistance program, CalFresh has a critical role to play in California's immediate COVID-19 response and long-term recovery efforts. Yet because of the complicated and burdensome application process, only a fraction of eligible older Californians (age 60 or over) and only 70 percent of all eligible households are enrolled in the program. In order to better connect low-income Californians with ongoing federal food assistance, it is critical that we exercise every available option to simplify access to CalFresh.

The digital divide is very real for seniors and people with disabilities. Many do not have access to the latest devices, broadband service, and many who might have access need help using these tools. Many are much more comfortable on the phone or when safe, in person. They should not be denied access to CalFresh benefits that they are eligible because they do not use technology to access benefits.

For these reasons, CARA supports SB 107 and thanks you for introducing this important legislation. CARA looks forward to working with you on its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hene Kelly".

**Hene Kelly
CARA Legislative Director
415-533-5244**

