



SB 173 – Dodd

CalFresh: postsecondary student eligibility

Summary

SB 173 is intended to increase awareness and utilization of CalFresh by college students participating in work study through a more uniform eligibility determination process.

Background

Food insecurity is widely recognized as a serious problem on UC, State, and Community College campuses. Many students are unaware that they may meet one of the numerous exemptions needed to qualify for CalFresh as a student. One particularly underutilized exemption is participation in state or federal work study. Lack of awareness about eligibility coupled with different forms utilized by different institutions of higher education further compounds the problem and depresses enrollment in CalFresh. Oftentimes, students in work study do not know that there is a strong likelihood that participation in this program may qualify them for CalFresh and they never apply.

Additionally, many colleges and universities utilize different forms for the same student eligibility determination purposes. This makes navigating the process more difficult for students and also makes it more difficult for county staff who process CalFresh applications to know conclusively which students may qualify for an eligibility exemption.

Existing Law

Federal law provides that students who are enrolled in college or other institutions of higher education at least half time are not eligible for SNAP benefits unless they meet one of several specified exemptions, including

participating in specified employment training programs.

The Department of Social Services maintains a list of programs that meet Federal Regulations which provide that a student is eligible for an exemption from the CalFresh program's eligibility rules if the student's attendance increases the student's employability.

The Department also issues instructions for county human service agencies to verify exemptions to the CalFresh student eligibility rules for those students approved for state or federal work study.

This Bill

Requires the department, in consultation with representatives of the office of the Chancellor of the Community Colleges, the office of the Chancellor of the CA State University, UC Chancellors' offices, and California Department of Social Services, create a standardized form to be used by the colleges to verify the work study exemption status of students who are approved and anticipating participation in state or federal work study. To the extent practicable, the colleges shall distribute the form to all students approved for state or federal work study. CDSS will provide clear instructions on how to use the form to all county human services agencies. This will make the exemption identification process easier for financial aid offices, students seeking benefits, and county health and human services eligibility workers.

Support

Yolo County (Sponsor)

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