

## CALIFORNIA FOOD, RESOURCE, AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE ACT

### SCARCITY IS A POLICY CHOICE

State of California, 2025-2026 Regular Session

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Version 2. Originally drafted 2015-2016 for the State of Colorado;

California adaptation March 2026.

April 2026

### VERIFICATION NOTES:

#### CALIFORNIA FISCAL FRAMEWORK:

- California FY2025-26 total budget: ~\$321.1B (signed by Governor Newsom June 27, 2025; first51a.org analysis)
- California FY2025-26 general fund: ~\$228.4B (enacted; general fund expenditures \$228,366M per ebudget.ca.gov; calhospital.org budget agreement summary)
- California population: ~39.5M (California Department of Finance January 2025 estimate; PPIC July 2025)
- Per-capita general fund spend: ~\$5,778 (higher tier), Table 1 (\$609/person/yr) applies
- DIVISION I FOOD PROGRAM TARGET:  $\$609 \times \sim 39.5M = \sim \$24.1B/\text{year}$ , ~10.5% of general fund
- California CalFresh (SNAP): ~\$12B annual benefit distribution, ~5.3M recipients, fiscal year 2023-24, all federally funded (Legislative Analyst's Office, The 2025-26 Budget: Food Assistance Programs); runs as a parallel, supplementary channel, not a guarantee
- Federal H.R. 1 (2025) SNAP admin cost-shift 50% to 75% effective Oct 1, 2026, an unfunded state obligation added to the current lift
- Citizen statutory initiative: Article II Sec 8, CA Constitution; 5% of votes cast for Governor in last general election (546,651 for the November 2022 vintage threshold); constitutional initiative requires 8%

### CALIFORNIA STATE ASSETS AND WOUNDS:

- #1 agricultural state in the nation: ~\$61.2B in annual production value (CDFA; USDA); nation's largest producer of fruits, nuts, vegetables, dairy
- Central Valley paradox: nation's largest agricultural output co-located with farmworker food insecurity reported at 45% among Latino farmworkers (National Agricultural Workers Survey; Green America, "Who Feeds the Farmworkers?"); the people who grow the nation's produce cannot afford to eat it
- Imperial Valley: winter produce adjacent to Yuma, AZ (combined, the two valleys feed most of the nation November through March)
- Defense Commissary Agency: commissary stores at more than a dozen California military installations, including Camp Pendleton, Naval Base San Diego, Travis AFB, Edwards AFB, Vandenberg SFB; at-cost food for authorized military, funded by appropriation from all California taxpayers
- Homelessness crisis: LA County homeless population; SF Tenderloin; California has ~30% of the nation's unsheltered homeless population
- Wildfire and drought: climate-driven agricultural stress on Central Valley water supply; Colorado River Compact constraints on the Imperial Valley
- California food insecurity: more than 1 in 5 residents, ~8.8M people (California Association of Food Banks)
- California codes amended: Food and Agricultural Code (Division 24)

### FEDERAL STRUCTURAL OVERLOAD (Paper VII, universal to all bills):

- 22 federal government shutdowns since 1976; 2025 shutdown 43 days (longest in US history), furloughed ~670,000 federal employees
- House size frozen at 435 by Permanent Apportionment Act of 1929; 762,000 constituents per representative (worst in OECD)
- Senate cloture motions: 49 total 1917-1970; now 2,000+ per decade
- Debt ceiling raised/extended/revised 78 times since 1960; 2011 first US credit-rating downgrade
- Swiss Federal Council: 7 members, rotating presidency, since 1848

(~178 years), >80% citizen trust (counter-example); Roman consuls paired for 482 years

HISTORICAL AND BIOLOGICAL PRECEDENT (Papers VIII + I, universal):

- Augustus annona civica: formalized ~27 BC, ~200,000 Roman citizens, 400+ year duration (Suetonius; Appian; Cassius Dio)

- Augustus tyrant record: ~300 senators + 2,000 equestrians proscribed; Pinarius stabbed for taking notes (Suetonius, Life of Augustus 27)

- Nerva alimenta: state-funded rural loans, interest redirected to orphan/destitute child nutrition (Cassius Dio)

- Tabula Alimentaria from Veleia: CIL XI 1147, bronze, Parma Museum

- Mabu Co archaeological site: Tibetan Plateau, 4,446m, sedentary settlement 4,400 years ago, 800-year duration (Nature Ecology and Evolution, September 2024)

- Azolla Event: freshwater fern *Azolla-Anabaena azollae* drove Arctic Ocean CO<sub>2</sub> drawdown ~49 MYA, 800,000 year duration; Eocene hothouse-to-icehouse transition (Brinkhuis et al., Nature 441, 2006)

MATHEMATICS OF ABUNDANCE (Paper III anchors, universal):

- US manufacturing establishments: ~293,000 (BLS Q4 2024) [VINTAGE: 2024]; capacity utilization ~77% (Federal Reserve G.17)

- US food-at-home spending: ~\$1.09 trillion (USDA ERS) [VINTAGE: 2024]

- USDA Food Dollar Series: 24.3 cents farm / 75.7 cents marketing

[VINTAGE: 2023 release]

- US food-insecure: 47.9 million (USDA ERS; CBPP December 2025)

[VINTAGE: 2024 household food security data]

- Food insecurity gap: ~\$32B/year; markup: ~\$496B/year; ratio 15x

- Defense Commissary Agency: established 1867; 10 U.S.C. Section 2484

(no-profit pricing); 236 stores; ~\$4B annual sales; 17-25% CONUS

savings; 2.8M authorized users; ~\$1.3B annual federal appropriation

PUBLIC HEALTH BASIS (Paper V anchors):

- Marmot Whitehall Studies (1967-present), 10,308 civil servants:

lowest grade 3x mortality of highest; standard risk factors explain <40% of the gradient

- Sapolsky (baboons), Shively (macaques), Blackburn (telomeres):

hierarchy produces measurable physiological damage across four research programs, six decades, three species

- Bowles-Gintis targeting-error correction (Cooper, Paper V, 2026)

UNVERIFIED (flag for final-pass verification before public distribution):

- Exact 2022 California gubernatorial election total (baseline for

current 5%/8% initiative signature thresholds); PDF only at the

CA Secretary of State, machine-readable vintage needs direct fetch

- Current exact CalFresh recipient count and annual benefit figure

(bill cites ~5.3M and ~\$12B for FY2023-24 per LAO; confirm against the latest CDSS dashboard)

- California food-insecure headcount: bill cites ~8.8M from the

California Association of Food Banks; Feeding America Map the Meal Gap reports a different vintage; confirm the preferred figure

- Imperial Valley winter-produce specific acreage percentage of

national supply; general figure well attested, exact percentage

pending USDA ERS direct confirmation

All other data points verified via SearXNG on 2026-05-21 or carried

forward from the bill's prior fiscal-verification pass. Sources cited

inline throughout the bill findings.

**CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE**

2025-2026 Regular Session

ASSEMBLY/SENATE BILL \_\_\_\_

BY \_\_\_\_\_ (Introduced by request)

**CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE PROGRAM FOR FOOD AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE TO ENSURE THE MATERIAL SECURITY OF ALL CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, AMENDING THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL CODE, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION, AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

## **LONG TITLE**

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AN ACT TO ADD DIVISION 24 (COMMENCING WITH SECTION 80000) TO THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL CODE, RELATING TO FOOD AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE, AND MAKING AN APPROPRIATION THEREFOR.

## **LEGISLATIVE ROUTING NOTE**

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California has a citizen ballot initiative process. Under Article II, Section 8 of the California Constitution, citizens may propose statutes and amendments to the Constitution by initiative. The signature requirement for a statewide initiative statute is five percent (5%) of the total votes cast for Governor at the last gubernatorial election. Based on the November 2022 gubernatorial election, the current threshold is 546,651 valid signatures for an initiative statute and 874,641 valid signatures for a constitutional amendment (California Secretary of State, Initiative Qualification Requirements, 2024-2026 cycle).

**FILING:** An initiative measure is filed with the California Attorney General, who prepares a title and summary within sixty-five (65) days (Elections Code Section 9004). The proponent then has one hundred eighty (180) days to collect signatures (Elections Code Section 9014). Once filed with county elections officials, signatures are verified and the measure is certified for the ballot by the Secretary of State (Elections Code Sections 9030-9033).

Alternatively, this bill may be introduced through the Legislature by any member of the Assembly or Senate. A bill may be introduced at any time during the first year of a two-year legislative session and during the first fifteen (15) calendar days of the second year (Joint Rule 54).

**COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT:** Upon introduction, this bill would likely be assigned to the Assembly Agriculture Committee or the Senate Agriculture Committee, and to the Assembly Appropriations Committee or the Senate Appropriations Committee for fiscal review.

**FISCAL NOTE:** The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) prepares fiscal impact estimates for all ballot measures under Government Code Section 88003 and Elections Code Section 9005. For legislative bills, the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees conduct fiscal analysis.

**FLOOR VOTE:** Simple majority in each chamber (41 of 80 Assembly members; 21 of 40 Senators). Governor's signature or veto override (two-thirds of each chamber: 54 Assembly, 27 Senate).

**SESSION:** The 2025-2026 Regular Session of the California Legislature. California legislative sessions are two-year sessions; the Legislature convenes on the first Monday in December of each even-numbered year (California Constitution, Article IV, Section 3).

**HISTORY:** A version of this proposal was first developed in 2016 through the Sassafras and Maple Research Foundation (SMRF), the first non-partisan political trade school in the United States, registered with the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Division of Private Occupational Schools (DPOS). The original proposal was drafted for the State of Colorado and sidelined during the 2016-2017 legislative cycle. The present version is the California adaptation, incorporating research from the Historical Apoplexy series (Cooper, 2025-2026), a ten-paper academic work providing the evidentiary foundation for this legislation.

**CALIFORNIA'S POSITION:** California is the most powerful proof of concept in this series. With a gross domestic product of approximately \$4.1 trillion in 2024, California is the fourth-largest economy in the world, surpassing Japan and behind only the United States as a whole, China, and Germany. California is the number-one agricultural state in the nation (\$61.2 billion in production value, 2024) and the birthplace of the modern ballot initiative (1911, Governor Hiram Johnson). If this proposal works in California, it works anywhere.

## **LEGISLATIVE DECLARATION**

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

**SECTION 1. Legislative findings and declaration.**

(1) The Legislature hereby finds, determines, and declares that:

**FINDINGS RELATING TO THE STRUCTURAL IMPERATIVE FOR STATE ACTION:**

(a0) Twenty-two federal government shutdowns since 1976, including a forty-three-day shutdown in 2025. The House frozen at 435 since 1929; 762,000 constituents per representative, worst in the OECD. Federal H.R. 1 (2025) shifted SNAP administrative costs from fifty percent to seventy-five percent state share. The federal machine is structurally overloaded (Cooper, Paper VII, 2026). This state has the authority to act under its own legislative power rather than await federal action that structural overload prevents;

(a0a) The overload is structural, not partisan, and the working alternative is not theoretical. A collective executive operates without a single point of failure and cannot be captured by one faction. The Swiss Federal Council has run as a seven member executive with a rotating one year presidency since 1848, one hundred seventy-eight years, and reports citizen trust above eighty percent. The Roman Republic ran paired consuls for four hundred eighty-two years. These models function and are not consulted. The federal single-executive bottleneck is a designed limit, not a law of nature, and a state cannot wait on a structure built so that it cannot move (Cooper, Paper VII, 2026);

(a1) DENIAL IS NO LONGER NEUTRAL. Inaction by a legislature possessing the authority, capacity, and documented need to act constitutes active harm. The burden rests on denial;

**FINDINGS RELATING TO FOOD AND COMMODITY INSECURITY:**

(a) California is the number-one agricultural state in the United States, with farms and ranches generating approximately \$61.2 billion in total production value in 2024, the first time the state's production value exceeded \$60 billion (USDA Economic Research Service, 2024; California Department of Food and Agriculture). California produces over 400 commodities, including over one-third of the nation's vegetables and two-thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts;

(b) Despite this extraordinary productive capacity, more than one in five Californians, approximately 8.8 million people, experience food insecurity (California Association of Food Banks). In fiscal year 2023-24, approximately 5.3 million Californians received CalFresh benefits, totaling approximately \$12 billion, all of it federally funded (Legislative Analyst's Office, The 2025-26 Budget: Food Assistance Programs). Because California is the most populous state, its food-insecure population is also among the largest of any state in absolute terms;

(c) The Central Valley paradox: California's Central Valley produces approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of all food consumed in the United States. Yet forty-five percent (45%) of Latino farmworkers in the Central Valley reported food insecurity in a 2020 study (National Agricultural Workers Survey; Green America, "Who Feeds the Farmworkers?"). The people who grow America's food cannot afford to eat. This is not irony. This is the grocery proof made visible;

(d) The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Food Dollar Series establishes that the farm share of the United States food dollar is 24.3 cents, with the remaining 75.7 cents allocated to processing, transportation, wholesale, retail, and food service markup. Total United States food-at-home spending is approximately \$1.09 trillion; production cost is approximately \$213 to \$327 billion. The difference of approximately \$496 billion represents markup above production cost;

(e) The cost to close the food insecurity gap for all 47.9 million food-insecure Americans is approximately \$32 billion, which represents 6.5 percent of the \$496 billion markup between production cost and retail price (Cooper, "The Mathematics of Abundance," 2025). California's food-insecure residents are approximately 18 percent of the national total. The proportional cost to close California's food insecurity gap is therefore approximately \$5.9 billion, roughly 2.6 percent of the state's general fund;

(f) The United States military commissary system, established in 1867 and now codified at 10 U.S.C. Section 2484, has operated at-cost food distribution continuously for one hundred fifty-nine (159) years, delivering savings of 17 to 25 percent below civilian retail in the continental United States to approximately 2.8 million authorized users through 236 stores worldwide. This program is funded by all federal taxpayers but available only to military families and retirees. The Defense Commissary Agency operates commissary stores at more than a dozen California military installations, including Camp Pendleton, Naval Base San Diego, Travis Air Force Base, Edwards Air Force Base, and Vandenberg Space Force Base, yet civilian Californians whose taxes fund those stores are denied access;

(g) The geographer Albrecht Penck calculated in 1925 that Earth's carrying capacity was eight billion people using 1920s agricultural technology. The current world population is approximately eight billion. Since agricultural technology has advanced substantially beyond 1920s capacity, scarcity of food is not a physical constraint but a distribution and policy constraint (Penck, 1925; Cohen, "How Many People Can the Earth Support?," 1995);

(h) The United States has approximately 293,000 manufacturing facilities. Studies indicate that 10,000 to 15,000 facilities would suffice for universal material abundance, representing 20 to 30 times overcapacity, with United States manufacturing currently operating at approximately 77 percent capacity utilization (Federal Reserve; Cooper, "The Mathematics of Abundance," 2025). California alone has approximately 35,000 manufacturing establishments, more than any other state;

(i) In 2024 alone, 7,325 retail grocery store locations closed in the United States (Cooper, "Stolen Futures," 2025), while 54 million Americans live in food deserts. Redlined neighborhoods from the 1930s are 107 to 149 percent more likely to be food deserts today (2022 study, 102 U.S. cities). The commercial retail grocery model is collapsing as a distribution system. California, with the largest population of any state, experiences the highest absolute impact of this collapse;

(j) The economist John Kenneth Galbraith described in "The Affluent Society" (1958) the condition of "private opulence and public squalor," the coexistence of enormous private productive capacity with inadequate public provision of basic needs. This condition persists in California, where the state's agricultural and manufacturing output vastly exceeds its population's material requirements. California's \$4.1 trillion economy, the fourth largest in the world, coexists with approximately 8.8 million food-insecure residents;

(k) The economist Thorstein Veblen documented in "The Engineers and the Price System" (1921) the deliberate restriction of production capacity by business interests to maintain prices above production cost, a practice he termed the "conscious withdrawal of efficiency." The gap between California's productive capacity and its residents' material security reflects this structural dynamic;

(l) The designer and systems theorist Jacque Fresco proposed in "Designing the Future" (2007) a resource library model for the distribution of goods tiered by permanence: food as a constant-need resource, clothing as a semi-permanent resource, and durable goods as permanent resources, with currency surviving for the luxury tier. This Act applies the constant-need tier of that model: food and essential commodities provided at production cost, with the market economy intact for everything above the floor;

**FINDINGS RELATING TO HISTORICAL AND BIOLOGICAL PRECEDENT:**

(1) Augustus Caesar formalized the *annona civica*, monthly grain distribution to approximately 200,000 Roman citizens, as civic infrastructure. Augustus was a documented tyrant: Suetonius records him ordering a Roman knight stabbed on the spot for the offense of taking notes at a public assembly. Even he understood that hungry citizens are broken infrastructure. The *annona* operated for over 400 years. Emperor Nerva expanded it with the *alimenta*, child nutrition funded by government loans to farmers, recorded on the *Tabula Alimentaria* from Veleia (CIL XI 1147), a bronze inscription that still exists and can be visited. At Mabu Co, Tibet, sedentary abundance was sustained 4,400 years ago at 4,446 metres elevation with fishing hooks (Nature Ecology and Evolution, 2024). The Azolla Event, 49 million years ago, demonstrated that a single fern species replicating on freshwater sequestered enough atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to shift Earth's climate from hothouse to icehouse over 800,000 years (Brinkhuis et al., Nature 441, 2006). Three independent records establish that feeding populations is infrastructure, not charity: the commissary at 159 years, the *annona* at 400+ years, and biology across geologic time;

(12) This act is not government ownership of the means of production. The contrast is worth stating plainly. When New York City, under Mayor Mamdani, proposed a city-owned grocery store, the city itself would own and operate that store. This act does not do that. This Act contracts with private producers at production cost plus a facility surcharge not to exceed five percent. Farms stay private. Trucks stay private. Processing stays private. The closest private-sector parallel is Costco, a membership warehouse that uses volume purchasing to sell near production cost and remains a private company. Currency survives

for luxury, custom, and specialty goods. The Defense Commissary Agency has operated this at-cost model since 1867 without acquiring a single farm. The bill provides a floor. It does not replace the market;

(l3) The retail collapse and autonomous freight are already eliminating distribution jobs. Aurora Innovation operates driverless freight on the Dallas-Houston corridor today. More than 15,000 retail store closures are projected for 2025. The bill does not cause this displacement. The bill catches the workers it displaces by feeding them at production cost while the retail economy contracts around them. At-cost distribution removes the markup, not the labor. The commissary has truckers. Adam Smith named this worker two centuries ago, the man whose whole life was spent performing a few simple operations. The bill answers Smith's warning by catching that worker, not discarding him;

(m) The Sassafras and Maple Research Foundation (SMRF), the first non-partisan political trade school in the United States, registered with the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Division of Private Occupational Schools (DPOS), developed the original version of this proposal for the State of Colorado in

**2016. SMRF was founded by Imran Cooper with the express purpose** of training citizens in legislative drafting, policy analysis, and democratic participation. The present legislation represents the California adaptation of that 2016 proposal, incorporating research from the Historical Apoplexy series (Cooper, 2025-2026).

(2) The Legislature further finds that the food and commodity assurance program established by this Act is a single, coherent policy instrument. It redirects expenditure the state and its residents already make on food, through a less efficient commercial channel, into an at-cost distribution channel modeled on a federal program that has operated continuously since 1867.

(3) The Legislature further finds that California's position as the nation's largest agricultural producer and the world's fourth-largest economy makes California the most consequential proof of concept for this legislation. If it works in California, it works anywhere.

#### **THE FOOD AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM**

**SECTION 2. Division 24 (commencing with Section 80000) is added to the Food and Agricultural Code, to read:**

#### **DIVISION 24**

California Food Assurance Program

**80000. Short title.**

This division shall be known and may be cited as the "California Food Assurance Act."

**80001. Definitions.**

As used in this division, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) "At-cost pricing" means the price of a food product calculated as the sum of the direct production cost paid to the producer or supplier plus a facility surcharge not to exceed five percent (5%) of the production cost, with no additional profit margin, markup, or marketing cost applied.

(b) "Department" means the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

(c) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Food and Agriculture.

(d) "Food assurance center" means a state-operated facility established under this division for the purpose of distributing food products to California residents at at-cost pricing.

(e) "Facility surcharge" means a charge not to exceed five percent (5%) of the production cost of a food product, applied to cover the operational costs of a food assurance center, including but not limited to facility maintenance, labor, utilities, and transportation.

(f) "Production cost" means the cost of producing a food product as determined by the department based on wholesale acquisition price from producers, cooperatives, or the most proximate point in the supply chain to the point of original production.

**80002. California food assurance program, creation, purpose.**

(a) There is hereby created in the Department of Food and Agriculture the California food assurance program.

(b) The purpose of the program is to establish state-operated food distribution centers where all California residents may purchase the full range of grocery products at at-cost pricing, modeled on the United States military commissary system as authorized by 10 U.S.C. Section 2484 and as operated by the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) continuously since 1867.

(c) The program shall:

- (1) Establish and operate food assurance centers throughout the state of California;
- (2) Purchase food products directly from California producers, cooperatives, and wholesale suppliers at or near production cost;
- (3) Sell food products to California residents at at-cost pricing as defined in Section 80001;
- (4) Prioritize procurement from California farms and ranches to the maximum extent practicable, with a California-sourced procurement target of fifty percent (50%) within three (3) years and seventy percent (70%) within five (5) years;
- (5) Accept all forms of payment including but not limited to cash, electronic benefit transfer (EBT), CalFresh (SNAP) benefits, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) vouchers;
- (6) Operate without profit motive, with all revenue above operational costs reinvested in program expansion.

**80003. Pilot food assurance centers, locations, timeline.**

(a) Within two (2) years of the effective date of this division, the department shall establish not fewer than fifteen (15) pilot food assurance centers in the following regions:

- (1) Four (4) centers in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, with at least one in South Los Angeles and one in the San Fernando Valley;
- (2) Two (2) centers in the San Francisco Bay Area, with at least one in the East Bay (Alameda or Contra Costa County);
- (3) Two (2) centers in the San Diego metropolitan area;
- (4) Two (2) centers in the Central Valley, with at least one in the Fresno-Madera metropolitan area and one in the Bakersfield metropolitan area;
- (5) One (1) center in the Sacramento metropolitan area;
- (6) One (1) center in the Inland Empire (Riverside or San Bernardino County);
- (7) One (1) center in the Salinas-Monterey area (Monterey County);
- (8) One (1) center in the Imperial Valley (Imperial County);
- (9) One (1) center in the North Coast or Northern California region (Humboldt, Shasta, or Butte County).

(b) Within five (5) years of the effective date of this division, the department shall expand the program to not fewer than fifty (50) food assurance centers statewide, with at least one center in each of California's fifty-two (52) congressional districts and at least ten (10) centers serving rural communities and food deserts as defined by the department.

(c) The department shall prioritize locations with the highest rates of food insecurity, the greatest distances to existing grocery retail, the largest populations residing in food deserts, and historically redlined neighborhoods.

(d) The Central Valley shall receive proportionally elevated investment, recognizing the paradox that the region producing twenty-five percent of America's food contains some of the most food-insecure communities in the state.

**80004. California food assurance fund, creation.**

(a) There is hereby created in the State Treasury the California Food Assurance Fund.

(b) The fund shall consist of:

- (1) Appropriations made by the Legislature;
- (2) Revenue generated by the facility surcharge at food assurance centers;
- (3) Federal funds, grants, and reimbursements directed to food distribution programs;
- (4) Any other moneys made available for the purposes of this division.

(c) Moneys in the fund shall be used exclusively for the establishment, operation, and expansion of food assurance centers and the procurement of food products for sale at at-cost pricing.

(d) The State Controller shall report annually on the fund's receipts, expenditures, and balance.

**80005. Procurement, California-first.**

(a) The department shall establish procurement policies that prioritize California-sourced products while maintaining the full range of grocery items expected by consumers.

(b) The department shall develop partnerships with:

- (1) California agricultural cooperatives and farm bureaus;
- (2) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs;
- (3) The University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) and UC Davis agricultural research programs;
- (4) California's existing food bank network, including the California Association of Food Banks, for logistical coordination.

(c) The department shall not engage in any practice that creates anticompetitive conditions for California agricultural producers.

**80006. Employment and labor.**

(a) All employees of food assurance centers shall be state employees or contract employees subject to prevailing wage requirements under Labor Code Section 1720 et seq.

(b) Food assurance centers shall comply with all applicable California labor, health, and safety standards.

(c) The department shall prioritize hiring from the communities where food assurance centers are located.

**80007. Essential goods program.**

(a) There is hereby created in the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) the California Essential Goods Program.

(b) The program shall procure and distribute clothing, household supplies, hygiene products, tools, and other essential goods at below-retail pricing through manufacturing partnerships, cooperative procurement, and direct distribution.

(c) Distribution shall occur through food assurance center locations and through dedicated distribution points as determined by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

(d) Procurement shall prioritize California-manufactured goods.

**80008. Reporting and transparency.**

(a) The department shall publish quarterly reports on:

- (1) The number of food assurance centers in operation;
- (2) The volume and value of food sold at at-cost pricing;
- (3) The percentage of California-sourced products;
- (4) Fund receipts, expenditures, and balance;
- (5) Geographic distribution of centers relative to food insecurity data.

(b) All reports shall be made publicly available on the department's internet website.

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

### SECTION 3. Appropriation.

The following amounts are hereby appropriated from the General Fund for the initial fiscal year of implementation:

California Department of Food and Agriculture  
(food assurance program): \$200,000,000

Governor's Office of Business and Economic  
Development (essential goods program): \$50,000,000

TOTAL: \$250,000,000

This total represents approximately 0.11 percent of California's \$228.4 billion general fund for fiscal year 2025-26 (California enacted budget, signed June 27, 2025).

FOOD PROGRAM TARGET. The at-cost food assurance program established by this Act, serving California's population of approximately 39.5 million residents [SOURCE: California Department of Finance January 2025 estimate; PPIC, 2025], requires approximately \$24.1 billion per year at production cost, calculated at \$609 per resident per year for a full baseline of staple food items priced at 30 percent of retail under the USDA Food Dollar Series farm-share methodology [SOURCE: USDA Economic Research Service Food Dollar Series, 2023]. That target is approximately 10.5 percent of the state general fund of \$228.4 billion [SOURCE: California enacted budget, signed June 27, 2025]. California per-capita general fund spending is approximately \$5,778 per resident, which places California in the higher fiscal tier for which the full \$609 baseline is appropriate. The \$250 million appropriated above is startup funding; the program scales to the full baseline over seven years.

CONTEXT. Approximately \$12 billion in CalFresh (SNAP) benefits is distributed in California each year, all of it federally funded [SOURCE: California Legislative Analyst's Office, The 2025-26 Budget: Food Assistance Programs]. Those benefits are spent through commercial retailers, where 75.7 cents of every food dollar pays for markup rather than food. Routed instead through this Act at production cost plus a surcharge not exceeding five percent, each of those dollars delivers close to four times the food, before any new appropriation.

THE FEDERAL SNAP COST-SHIFT. Federal H.R. 1 (2025) raised the state share of SNAP administrative costs from fifty percent to seventy-five percent, effective October 1, 2026, an unfunded obligation the state did not request. Routed through the at-cost program established by this Act, each SNAP dollar delivers close to four times the food it delivers through commercial retail. That efficiency gain independently offsets the federal cost-shift.

FISCAL CONVERGENCE. The arithmetic says that ending the gap costs a single-digit percentage of the markup the state already pays. The operational template has run for one hundred fifty-nine years inside the same federal apparatus California already funds through federal taxes. California is not asked to attempt something untested. California is asked to deliver to its own residents what its veterans have received since 1867.

THE FISCAL LOCK. The claim that the state cannot afford this Act is answered by the state's own ledger. California already spends on the less efficient version of this program while absorbing a federal cost-shift it did not request. The fiscal question is not whether to spend. It is whether to keep spending several times what the same result requires. Denial is no longer neutral.

**SECTION 4. Effective date.**

This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2027. Pilot food assurance centers shall be operational within two (2) years of the effective date.

**SECTION 5. Severability.**

If any provision of this act, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances, is held invalid, the remainder of the act and the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

**SECTION 6. Conflicts.**

In the event of a conflict between any provision of this act and any existing provision of the Food and Agricultural Code, the provisions of this act shall prevail.

**SECTION 7. Construction.**

This act shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purpose of ensuring food and commodity security for all California residents.

**THE PUBLIC HEALTH BASIS: WHY THIS ACT REACHES BEYOND BARE SURVIVAL**

This Act feeds people at production cost. The closing question is why food assurance is the correct instrument, and the answer is medical.

Food insecurity and economic hierarchy are not only economic conditions. They are medical conditions, with documented physiological pathways that produce measurable morbidity and mortality. The scientific record establishes the following:

(1) WHITEHALL STUDIES (MARMOT): Sir Michael Marmot's Whitehall Studies (1967-present), studying 10,308 British civil servants, all employed, all with universal healthcare, none in absolute poverty, found that the lowest employment grade had three (3) times the mortality rate of the highest grade. Standard risk factors explained less than forty percent (40%) of the gradient. The hierarchy itself produced the health damage, independent of poverty, deprivation, or healthcare access;

(2) PRIMATE HIERARCHY STUDIES (SAPOLSKY): Dr. Robert Sapolsky's thirty-year study of wild baboon populations demonstrated that subordinate social position produces chronically elevated cortisol, atherosclerosis, immune suppression, and cognitive impairment. When the hierarchy collapsed following a tuberculosis outbreak, subordinates' cortisol normalized. The biology follows the social structure;

(3) CARDIOVASCULAR HIERARCHY STUDIES (SHIVELY): Dr. Carol Shively's thirty-year study of female macaques demonstrated that subordinate social status directly causes visceral fat accumulation, atherosclerosis, and coronary artery disease, with cingulate cortex serotonin identified as the neurological nexus linking depression to cardiovascular disease;

(4) TELOMERE STUDIES (BLACKBURN): Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn (2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine) demonstrated that chronic psychological stress shortens telomeres, the protective caps on chromosomal DNA, accelerating cellular aging. Poverty and subordination age human beings at the molecular level;

(5) THE GRADIENT IS THE DISEASE: The Whitehall, Sapolsky, Shively, and Blackburn findings converge on one result. The gap is the gradient, not the deprivation. The damage is produced by position within a hierarchy, and it is documented across four research programs, six decades, and three species. Treating sickness downstream of an untreated gradient is documented to fail. Hierarchy itself kills. Food and commodity assurance is therefore a structural public health intervention rather than charity, because it compresses the gradient that the medical system is otherwise left to treat one body at a time;

(6) THE TARGETING ERROR: Bowles and Gintis, in "Schooling in Capitalist America" (1976), named a real condition and located it at the wrong site. They identified socioeconomic stratification and assigned it to the schools. Stratification is the ocean, not the cup. The gradient is the disease, and it runs through housing, wages, healthcare, and the criminal justice system. Targeting any single institution misses the mechanism. This correction (Cooper, Paper V, 2026) is what allows the public health case for this Act to be read by a working family and a fiscal conservative alike.

The finding is structural and medical. It is not an accusation aimed at any institution or its staff.

The arithmetic of this Act is a food program. The reason the arithmetic matters is medical. A food and commodity assurance program compresses the gradient that the medical system is otherwise left to treat one body at a time. That is why this Act feeds people. That is why denial is no longer neutral.

## REFERENCES

The research and citations supporting this legislation are drawn from the Historical Apoplexy series (Cooper, 2025-2026), a ten-paper academic work. Principal references include:

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- Cooper, I. (2025). "Stolen Futures." Paper IV.
- Cooper, I. (2026). "The Targeting Error." Paper V.
- Cooper, I. (2026). "The Structural Overload." Paper VII.
- Cooper, I. (2026). "Venus Prime." Paper VIII.

END OF BILL

## CALIFORNIA FOOD, RESOURCE, AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE ACT

California State Legislature, 2025-2026 Regular Session

Prepared by: The Amanuensis, [theamanuensis.com](http://theamanuensis.com)

Originally proposed: 2016 (Cooper, SMRF, Colorado DPOS Registration)

California adaptation: March 2026

"The Central Valley grows twenty-five percent of America's food.

Forty-five percent of its farmworkers go hungry.

That is the grocery proof. That is California."

# APPENDIX A

## Citizen Initiative Ballot Language

Prepared pursuant to Article II, Section 8  
California Constitution

**546,651 signatures required**

## **CITIZEN INITIATIVE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Pursuant to Article II, Section 8 of the California Constitution

### **CALIFORNIA FOOD, RESOURCE, AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE ACT**

#### **SCARCITY IS A POLICY CHOICE**

Filed with the California Attorney General

Title and Summary prepared pursuant to Elections Code Section 9004

Signature Requirement: 546,651 valid signatures (initiative statute)

(Five percent of total votes cast for Governor at the November 8,  
2022 general election)

Circulation Deadline: 180 days from date of filing

(Elections Code Section 9014)

**BALLOT TITLE**

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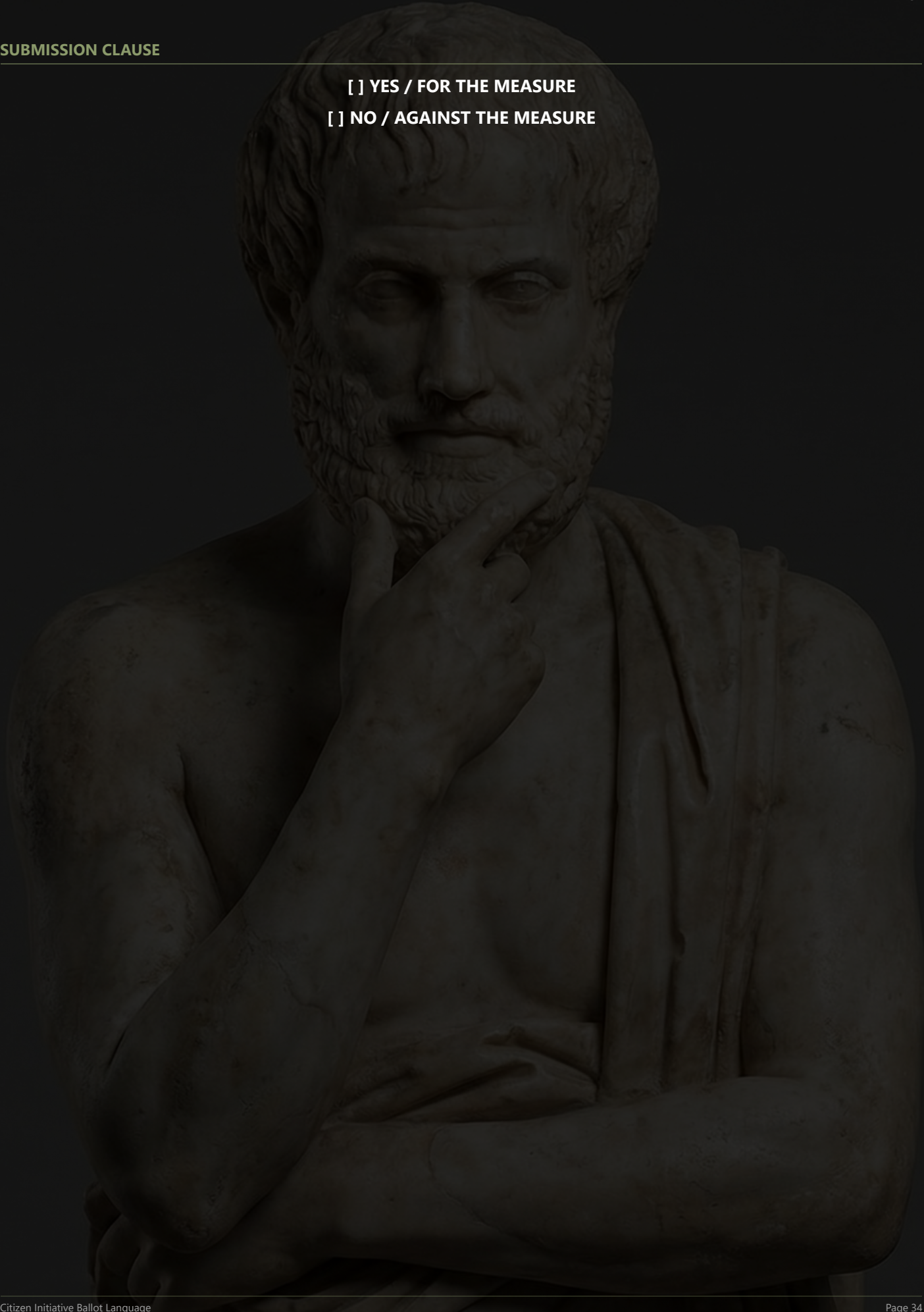
SHALL THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA ENACT THE CALIFORNIA FOOD, RESOURCE, AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE ACT, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH:

- (1) CREATING A CALIFORNIA FOOD ASSURANCE PROGRAM OPERATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TO SELL GROCERY PRODUCTS AT AT-COST PRICING TO ALL CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS THROUGH STATE-OPERATED FOOD ASSURANCE CENTERS, WITH NOT FEWER THAN FIFTEEN PILOT CENTERS WITHIN TWO YEARS, INCLUDING FOUR IN LOS ANGELES, TWO IN THE BAY AREA, TWO IN SAN DIEGO, TWO IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY, AND FIVE IN OTHER REGIONS, AND FIFTY CENTERS STATEWIDE WITHIN FIVE YEARS, MODELED ON THE 159-YEAR MILITARY COMMISSARY PRECEDENT;
- (2) CREATING A CALIFORNIA ESSENTIAL GOODS PROGRAM THROUGH THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO PROCURE AND DISTRIBUTE CLOTHING, HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES, HYGIENE PRODUCTS, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL GOODS AT BELOW-RETAIL PRICING;
- (3) APPROPRIATING TWO HUNDRED FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS (\$250,000,000) FROM THE GENERAL FUND AS STARTUP FUNDING, REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY 0.11 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S APPROXIMATELY TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT POINT FOUR BILLION DOLLAR GENERAL FUND?

**SUBMISSION CLAUSE**

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**YES / FOR THE MEASURE**  
 **NO / AGAINST THE MEASURE**



**BALLOT TEXT**

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This measure adds Division 24 (commencing with Section 80000) to the Food and Agricultural Code to create the California Food Assurance Act, a single operative program for food and commodity assurance.

**THE FOOD AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM**

This measure creates:

- A California Food Assurance Program operated by the Department of Food and Agriculture, establishing state-operated food distribution centers where all California residents may purchase the full range of grocery products at at-cost pricing (production cost plus a facility surcharge not exceeding 5%);
- Not fewer than fifteen pilot centers within two years: four in the Los Angeles metropolitan area (including South LA and the San Fernando Valley), two in the Bay Area, two in San Diego, two in the Central Valley (Fresno and Bakersfield), one in Sacramento, one in the Inland Empire, one in Salinas-Monterey, one in the Imperial Valley, and one in Northern California;
- Expansion to fifty statewide centers within five years, with at least one center in each of California's congressional districts and at least ten centers serving rural communities and food deserts;
- California-first procurement: 50% California-sourced within three years, increasing to 70% within five years, supporting the state's \$61.2 billion agricultural economy;

- A California Essential Goods Program distributing clothing, household supplies, hygiene products, tools, and other essential goods at below-retail pricing through manufacturing partnerships and direct procurement.

#### **EVIDENTIARY BASIS: The USDA ERS Food Dollar Series establishes the farm**

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share of the food dollar at 24.3 cents, with 75.7 cents in markup. The United States military commissary system has operated at-cost food distribution for 159 years under 10 U.S.C. Section 2484, at commissary stores on more than a dozen California military installations, funded by California taxpayers but restricted to military families.

California's agricultural output of \$61.2 billion (2024), the highest of any state in the nation, produces over 400 commodities. Yet approximately 8.8 million Californians, more than one in five, experience food insecurity. In the Central Valley, forty-five percent of Latino farmworkers, the people who grow America's food, cannot afford to eat. Approximately \$12 billion in CalFresh (SNAP) benefits, all federally funded, is distributed in California each year through commercial retailers where 75.7 cents of every food dollar pays for markup rather than food.

**THE PUBLIC HEALTH BASIS:** The measure is grounded in the finding that food insecurity and economic hierarchy are medical conditions with documented physiological pathways. The Whitehall Studies (Marmot) found that the lowest employment grade among British civil servants had three times the mortality of the highest grade, with standard risk factors explaining less than forty percent of the gradient.

Primate research (Sapolsky on baboons, Shively on macaques) and Nobel Prize-winning telomere research (Blackburn) document the same gradient across four research programs, six decades, and three species.

Hierarchy itself kills. A food and commodity assurance program is a structural public health intervention, not charity.

## PROPONENT STATEMENT

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This initiative proposes a state-level reform of food distribution in the state best positioned to prove it works.

### THE CALIFORNIA PARADOX:

California is the number-one agricultural state in the nation. Our farms and ranches generated \$61.2 billion in 2024, the first time any state exceeded \$60 billion. We produce over 400 commodities. We feed the country. We feed the world.

And yet approximately 8.8 million Californians, more than one in five, cannot consistently feed themselves.

In the Central Valley, the people who grow America's food go hungry.

Forty-five percent of Latino farmworkers in the Central Valley reported food insecurity. They pick the strawberries, the almonds, the lettuce, the tomatoes. They grow twenty-five percent of all food consumed in the United States. And they cannot afford to eat.

This is not irony. This is the grocery proof. The USDA documents that 75.7 cents of every food dollar pays for markup, not food. The military commissary has distributed food at cost for 159 years to military families, at stores on more than a dozen California military installations. California taxpayers fund those stores. California taxpayers are denied access.

### THE ECONOMY ARGUMENT:

California's GDP is \$4.1 trillion. We are the fourth-largest economy in the world; we passed Japan in 2024. We have approximately 35,000 manufacturing establishments, more than any other state. We have the infrastructure, the agricultural output, and the economic capacity to make this work. If this proposal succeeds anywhere, it succeeds here.

**THE HEALTH ARGUMENT:**

Six decades of research establish that hierarchy produces measurable disease:

- Marmot: three times the mortality at the bottom of the hierarchy, even with universal healthcare;
- Sapolsky: subordination produces cortisol damage in primates;
- Shively: subordinate status produces coronary artery disease;
- Blackburn (Nobel Prize): chronic stress shortens telomeres, the protective caps on DNA.

Food assurance is not charity. It is a public health intervention with a documented physiological basis. Reducing food insecurity reduces healthcare costs.

**THE COST:**

\$250 million in startup funding, approximately 0.11 percent of the state's \$228.4 billion general fund. Approximately \$12 billion in CalFresh benefits is already distributed in California each year, routed through commercial retailers at full retail markup. At-cost routing delivers close to four times the food value per benefit dollar. The food assurance program is designed to scale toward self-sufficiency over seven years through volume and the facility surcharge.

Originally proposed: 2016 (Sassafras and Maple Research Foundation, Colorado DPOS Registration). California adaptation: March 2026 (Historical Apoplexy series, Cooper).

## FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY

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(Prepared pursuant to Government Code Section 88003 and Elections Code Section 9005, Legislative Analyst's Office format)

INITIAL APPROPRIATION: \$250,000,000 from the General Fund for the first fiscal year of implementation, as startup funding.

PERCENTAGE OF GENERAL FUND: approximately 0.11 percent of approximately \$228.4 billion.

### BREAKDOWN:

Food Assurance Program (CDFA): \$200,000,000

Essential Goods Program (GO-Biz): \$50,000,000

### PROGRAM TARGET AT FULL SCALE:

The full at-cost food baseline for California's approximately 39.5 million residents is approximately \$24.1 billion per year at production cost (\$609 per resident per year), approximately 10.5 percent of the general fund. The \$250 million appropriation is startup funding; the program scales toward the full baseline over seven years, offset by the facility surcharge and by the redirection of existing food expenditure.

### PROJECTED ONGOING COSTS:

Food assurance operations: estimated \$150-200 million annually during the expansion phase (years 3-7), declining toward self-sufficiency through the facility surcharge.

### PROJECTED SAVINGS:

CalFresh efficiency: at-cost pricing delivers close to four times the food value per benefit dollar. Routing the existing federally funded CalFresh expenditure (approximately \$12 billion annually in California) through food assurance centers yields a substantial per-dollar food value improvement.

Federal SNAP cost-shift offset: Federal H.R. 1 (2025) raised the state share of SNAP administrative costs from fifty to seventy-five percent. The efficiency gain from at-cost routing independently offsets that cost-shift.

Healthcare cost reduction: improved nutrition and a compressed hierarchy gradient are projected to reduce healthcare costs, based on the Whitehall documentation of hierarchy-related healthcare utilization. California's Medi-Cal program serves over 15 million enrollees; nutrition-related chronic disease is a major cost driver.

CONTEXT:

California total state budget: approximately \$321.1 billion (FY2025-26)

California general fund: approximately \$228.4 billion

California CalFresh (SNAP) benefits distributed: approximately \$12 billion annually, all federally funded

California GDP: approximately \$4.1 trillion (fourth largest in the world)

Initial appropriation as share of the general fund: approximately 0.11%

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE MEASURE

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(As would appear in the California Voter Information Guide)

California grows twenty-five percent of America's food. Our farms produced \$61.2 billion in 2024. We are the number-one agricultural state in the nation.

And yet approximately 8.8 million of us, more than one in five Californians, do not know where the next meal is coming from. In the Central Valley, forty-five percent of farmworkers, the people who actually grow the food, cannot afford to eat.

The military commissary has sold food at cost for 159 years. It operates stores on more than a dozen California military installations. Your taxes fund those stores. You are not allowed to shop there. This measure extends the same at-cost model to all Californians.

The science is established: hierarchy produces disease. The Whitehall Studies documented three times the mortality at the bottom of the gradient, even with universal healthcare. Blackburn won the Nobel Prize documenting that chronic stress shortens the protective caps on DNA. These are measured, replicated findings, not opinions.

Cost: approximately 0.11 percent of the general fund. California already distributes approximately \$12 billion in CalFresh benefits through commercial retailers at full retail markup. At-cost routing delivers close to four times the food per dollar.

We have the farms. We have the economy. This is the proof of concept.



## REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST THE MEASURE

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(As would appear in the California Voter Information Guide)

Opponents will argue cost. The initial appropriation is approximately 0.11 percent of the general fund, startup funding. California already distributes approximately \$12 billion in CalFresh benefits that buy food at full retail markup. At-cost routing delivers close to four times the food value per dollar. This measure improves the return on money the state and its residents already spend.

Opponents will argue government overreach. The United States military has run at-cost commissaries for 159 years, with stores on more than a dozen California military installations. If at-cost distribution is sound enough for military families, it is sound enough for the taxpayers who fund it. The program contracts with private producers; farms, trucks, and processing stay private.

Opponents will argue it is too ambitious. California is the fourth-largest economy in the world. We produce over 400 agricultural commodities. We invented the ballot initiative. If any state on Earth can do this, it is California.

The people who grow our food deserve to eat. The people who pay taxes deserve access to at-cost distribution they already fund.

Vote YES.

**SIGNATURE LINES**

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I, the undersigned registered elector of the State of California, do hereby petition the Attorney General of the State of California to submit to the registered electors of the State of California an initiative measure amending the Food and Agricultural Code, concerning the establishment of the California Food, Resource, and Commodity Assurance Act, as set forth herein:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

(Repeat as needed. 546,651 valid signatures required.)

END OF BALLOT LANGUAGE

## CALIFORNIA FOOD, RESOURCE, AND COMMODITY ASSURANCE ACT

Citizen Initiative

Pursuant to Article II, Section 8, California Constitution

Prepared by: The Amanuensis, [theamanuensis.com](http://theamanuensis.com)

Originally proposed: 2016 (Cooper)

California adaptation: March 2026

"The Central Valley grows twenty-five percent of America's food.

Forty-five percent of its farmworkers go hungry.

California is the proof of concept. This is where it starts."