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Senate California Legislature

Dr. Richard Pan
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Chair
Health

Committees
Budget & Fiscal Review

Business, Professions & Economic
Development

Education

Human Services

Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health &
Human Services

SB 907: Electronic Benefits Transfer System: Farmers' Markets

SUMMARY

California's leadership to combat poverty and hungry are most evident through the implementation of the CalFresh Program. Furthermore, recent policy was adopted that further support anti-hungry efforts by creating access for recipients to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at California certified farmers' markets. Senate Bill 907 would establish a non-competitive grant program at the Department of Social Services and the Department of Food and Agriculture to expand the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) at California certified farmers' markets. Currently, only a limited number of certified farmers' markets offer access to fresh fruits and vegetables to recipients of CalFresh.

BACKGROUND

CalFresh, federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), provides monthly benefits to low income families, seniors, students, among others to help reduce hunger and increase healthy outcomes.

Farmers' markets are important sources of low-cost, nutritionally dense produce for Californians in need of food assistance, and increasing EBT access at farmers' markets decreases nutritional disparities in various communities across our state. Shopping at local farmers' markets is associated with healthy behavioral changes. Successful implementation of EBT access at farmers' markets creates the opportunity for a market to offer Market Match nutrition incentives, doubling the buying power of CalFresh dollars at the market. This drives increased consumption of fresh produce and leverages state and federal nutrition dollars that directly benefit our farming community.

PROBLEM

The current system of offering EBT access at farmers' markets presents many hurdles that prevent farmers'

markets from accepting EBT, such as, cumbersome qualifications requiring the farmers' market manager to become an authorized USDA SNAP retailer, high costs associated with the need to staff the EBT machine, handle backend accounting and reporting, and the implementation of best practices to encourage EBT use. Furthermore, research has shown that there was a 38 percent decrease in weekly SNAP transactions at markets with an unpaid volunteer managing these services compared to those with a paid staffer. Additionally, most farmers' markets operate on such thin margins, this often leaves EBT access at farmers' markets dependent upon a varying and unpredictable collection of small grants and funders. This, in turn, means many markets do not go through the process to offer any EBT access, offer only an underutilized and limited form of EBT access, or have EBT access constantly at risk of ending if enough funding cannot be secured.

SOLUTION

This bill would increase access to healthy foods at all certified farmers' markets in the State of California by establishing a noncompetitive grant program that would primarily provide dedicated EBT processing staff and EBT administrative support. The funding would also be used to scale and improve EBT processes at existing farmers' markets, establish EBT access at new certified markets in under-served low-income communities, and develop education and outreach efforts to local communities.

CONTACTS

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SUPPORT

NextGen California (co-sponsor)

Alchemist CDC (co-sponsor)

American Heart Association
The Riverside Food Systems Alliance
Mendocino County Farmers Market Association
Blue Zones Project
Blue Zones Project Mendocino County
Blue Zones Project Tuolumne County
Blue Zones Project Monterey County
North Coast Opportunities
Center for Land-Based Learning
Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me Wuk Indians of
California
Fresh Approach
Nutrition and Fitness Collaborative of the Central
Coast
The Food Initiative of Greater Stanislaus
Monterey County Food Policy Council
California Association of Food Banks
Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Alliance
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
North Coast Grower's Association
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
County of Sacramento
Peaceful Valley Farmers Market in Tuolumne County
Napa Farmers Market
Coast Side Farmers Markets
Modesto Certified Farmers Market
Santa Cruz Community Farmers Markets
Urban Villiage
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability
Heart of the City Farmers' Market
Marin Food Policy Council
San Diego Farmers Markets LLC
SEE LA
Roots of Change
Sacramento Food Policy Council
Agriculture and Land Based Training Association
(ALBA)
The Palm Springs Cultural Center
Natural Resources Defense Counsel
Foodwise
NeighborWorks Sacramento Region
Valley Vision
San Diego Food System Alliance
California Food and Farming Network
Agricultural Institute of Marin
Everyone's Harvest
California Catholic Conference
Public Health Institute

Office of Kat Taylor
The Ecology Center
Unseen Heroes
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