



### SUMMARY

---

To improve health outcomes, reduce avoidable healthcare spending and increase health equity for Medi-Cal beneficiaries, California must add medically supportive food and nutrition interventions as covered benefits in Medi-Cal.

### BACKGROUND

---

Medically Supportive Food and Nutrition (MSF&N) covers a spectrum of seven interventions, which provide nutrient-rich whole foods to prevent, manage, or reverse diet-sensitive health conditions. These include medically tailored meals, food pharmacies, produce prescriptions, and more.

Throughout California, various organizations are implementing "food as medicine" programs. For instance, in Alameda County, Recipe4Health offers patients regenerative and organic produce sourced from local black, indigenous, and people of color farmers, along with health coaching. Evaluations of the program have shown that nearly a third of patients experience clinically meaningful improvements in blood sugar control. Similarly, statewide medically tailored meal programs provide home-delivered meals tailored to recipients' health conditions by registered dietitian nutritionists, resulting in evaluations showing a more than 60% reduction in hospitalizations.

Healthy Food Rx project in Stockton, which aims to enhance access to fresh, healthy foods in low-income communities affected by diabetes. A study conducted over 12 months found significant improvements among participants, including a decrease in food insecurity by 10%, significant increase in daily food and vegetable consumption, a decrease of 0.35 in hemoglobin A1C levels and improvement in diabetes self-management.

Data from the National Health Interview Survey revealed that individuals experiencing food insecurity incur approximately \$1,863 higher healthcare expenditures annually than those unaffected by this challenge. Adjustments were made for variables such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, insurance, and residential location.

### EXISTING LAW

---

Medi-Cal, administered by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), provides healthcare services to qualified low-income individuals. Medi-Cal is partially governed and funded by federal Medicaid provisions.

Under the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative, which started on January 1, 2022, and ends in January 2027, Medi-Cal managed care plans have the option to provide coverage for cost-effective and medically appropriate community support services. Across California's 58 counties, there are 14 community support programs, with each county having at least two programs in operation.

Currently, the Medically Tailored Meals Pilot Program and the Short-Term Medically Tailored Meals constitute the two pilot initiatives providing medically tailored meal intervention services to qualifying Medi-Cal beneficiaries with specific health conditions across 57 counties in California. The remaining county will be opted July 2026.

### PROBLEM

---

Too many Californians, particularly Californians of color, are living with largely preventable chronic conditions. Adequate food and nutrition are a fundamental part of preventing and treating chronic conditions, and can significantly improve a patient's quality of life and health status while also reducing healthcare costs. The way communities approach healthy cooking is influenced by factors such as limited access to fresh foods, financial constraints preventing the purchase of nutritious groceries, and a lack of knowledge about cooking with unfamiliar ingredients.

### SOLUTION

---

AB 1975 will make medically supportive food and nutrition services a permanent covered benefit for all eligible beneficiaries under the Medi-Cal program.

## **SUPPORT**

---

- SPUR (co-sponsor)
- Food as Medicine Collaborative (co-sponsor)
- AARP
- AIDS Healthcare Foundation
- Alameda County Board of Supervisors
- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association
- Almond Alliance
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, District IX
- American Diabetes Association
- American Pistachio Growers
- Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
- Association of Regional Center Agencies
- Black Equity Collective
- CA4Health
- California Black Health Network
- California Black Power Network
- California Chronic Care Coalition
- California Food and Farming Network
- California Health Coalition Advocacy
- California Immigrant Policy Center
- California Kidney Care Alliance
- California Medical Association
- California Reparations Task Force Members Dr. Cheryl Grills, Lisa Holder, and Don Tamaki
- California Retired Teachers Association
- California WIC Association
- California-Hawaii State Conference of the NAACP
- Catalyst California
- Ceres Community Project
- City and County of San Francisco
- City of Long Beach
- Contra Costa Health Services
- County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC)
- Culver City Democratic Club
- Educate. Advocate.
- Equal Justice Society
- Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County
- Fresenius Medical Care North America
- Fresh Approach
- Glide
- Greater Sacramento Urban League
- Harbor Christian Church
- Health Access California
- Indivisible Ca: StateStrong
- LeadingAge California
- Livefree California
- Marin Food Policy Council
- Meals on Wheels California (UNREG)
- Meals on Wheels San Francisco
- Pesticide Action Network North America
- Purfoods, LLC A/k/a Mom's Meals
- Rising Communities
- Roots of Change
- Sacramento Food Policy Council
- San Diego Hunger Coalition
- San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
- Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
- The Praxis Project
- Veggielution
- Western Center on Law & Poverty, INC.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

---

Monica Sepulveda, *Legislative Aide*

[Monica.Sepulveda@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Monica.Sepulveda@asm.ca.gov) | (916) 319-2018