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May 25, 2018

Will Lightbourne
Director
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 900 (Wiener): Electronic Benefits Transfer System: CalFresh Supplemental Benefits (Support)

Dear Director Lightbourne:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Semiannual Business Meeting on May 9, 2018 to recommend a Support position on SB 900 (Wiener), a bill that would establish the California Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project, and require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to include within the EBT system a supplemental benefits mechanism. This supplemental benefits mechanism would allow an authorized CalFresh retailer to deliver and redeem additional funds onto a CalFresh recipient's EBT card when purchasing California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

SB 900 will also require CDSS to provide a minimum of three grants to nonprofit organizations or government agencies to pilot test the upgraded EBT system in grocery stores and farmers' markets. CDSS would be responsible for evaluating these pilot projects; making recommendations to further refine and expand the nutrition incentive program; and submitting an outcome evaluation report to the Legislature on or before January 2, 2020.

California has 4.3 million CalFresh recipients, who represent a vulnerable population that is at an increased risk for food insecurity and chronic diseases. CCLHO recommends a support position on SB 900, as this bill would increase CalFresh recipients' access to fruits and vegetables and provide an opportunity to pilot a new EBT system using data to expand and scale a nutrition incentive program.

Nutrition incentive programs have been shown to improve access to healthy foods for vulnerable populations. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made efforts to support nutrition incentive programs through the Healthy Incentive Pilot (HIP) and the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients (referred to as CalFresh in California). HIP provided SNAP recipients financial incentives to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables; with SNAP recipients receiving 30 cents for every SNAP dollar spent on fruits and vegetables. An evaluation in 2011 showed that HIP households that received the SNAP incentives increased their fruit and vegetable intake by 26 percent, compared to households who received SNAP with no incentives¹.

¹ Bartlett, Susan, Jacob Klerman, Parke Wilde, Lauren Olsho, Christopher Logan, Michelle Blocklin, Marianne Beauregard, and Ayesha Enver. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) Final Report. Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2014. Available online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/research-and-analysis>.

Director Will Lightbourne
Page 2
May 25, 2018

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

Should you have any questions, please contact me by email at ken.cutler@co.nevada.ca.us or by phone at 530-265-7154.

Sincerely and on behalf of the CCLHO membership,

Original signed by Dr. Ken Cutler

Ken Cutler, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers

cc: Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH, Director and State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health