



Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative

December 12, 2019

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California Department of Aging
Office of the Director
1300 National Drive, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95384

RE: Food Access Recommendations for the Master Plan for Aging

Dear Ms. McCoy-Wade:

I represent the Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative, a non-profit organization working to

Since 2017 we have specifically worked on programs to serve seniors in partnership with the full range of non-profit groups and governmental agencies implementing the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) in California. I write to urge you to include priority goals, strategies, and budget commitments to improve access to nutritious food for older adults within the Master Plan.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

California seniors rely upon a patchwork of programs to meet the diverse nutritional needs of our aging and disabled population. While these supports are having significant positive impacts on California, a fragmented and underfunded system is limiting additional progress. The 'SSI-Cashout', also being referred to as "CalFresh Expansion" represents a unique moment when we can draw in new seniors that are in need of CalFresh support but for various reasons have not accessed the resource. According to California Food Policy Associates, today the rate and number of older adults affected by food insecurity remains well above pre-recession levels. The Master Plan for Aging provides an opportunity to foster innovation, and identify strategies to strengthen and better leverage California's diverse federal, state, and local nutrition programs and services. To make the most of this opportunity we urge you to:

- Provide dedicated time and space to develop strategies related to nutrition as part of the Master Plan's development. Food and nutrition strategies should be introduced, discussed, and vetted during a Master Plan for Aging Stakeholder Advisory committee or sub-committee meeting or through the addition of a Master Plan for Aging subcommittee on nutrition.
- Incorporate equitable access to a broad range of food and nutrition resources for older adults, and future generations as a priority goal within the Master Plan for Aging.

- Make a clear commitment to state funding with new state dollars designated to support and incentivize seniors accessing locally grown healthful food including fruits and vegetables. Leverage federal funding (including SNAP, and SFMNP, etc.) to draw down appropriate resources, but do not limit the State's commitment based on appropriations determined at the federal level.

At this time, we recommend a Food Element of the Master Plan include, but not be limited to:

1) Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Dedicated State-funding allocation should more than quadruple the federal benefit going to California seniors annually and double the number of participants. Federal FY 2019 funding for Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program in California's is approximately \$750,000. This reaches less than 37,500 California seniors annually. The amount distributed to each low-income senior has been \$20 annually. While valuable, this is not significant enough to influence long-term behavior change or quality of diet. The state should allocate funds to:

- a. Double the number of senior participants
Annual Cost to State: \$ 750,000
- b. Quadruple the federal funding allocation so that each senior receives \$80 over the year. (\$20 per person federal/\$60 per person state)
Annual Cost to State: \$4.5 million
(\$60*75,000 seniors = \$4,500,000)
- c. \$ for CDFA administration costs related to expanding the program.
Annual Cost to State: \$ 150,000

Total Cost of State Expansion Annually \$5.4 million

Note on precedence: The sister program to SFMNP is WIC FMNP. Oregon has used state funds to increase the WIC farmers market purchases.

2) Farm Fresh to Seniors: Healthful, local food for California seniors

The state should launch a new program to support senior serving institutions purchasing local, healthful food for California seniors. This would be modeled after the federal Farm to School program. It would simultaneously support California family farmers; and facilitate culturally appropriate, healthful foods being served to seniors. We recommend a funding level of \$5 million per year for a program to be administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Office of Farm to Fork. Program would include direction for coordination with California Dep't. of Aging.

Total Cost to State Annually: \$5 million

Note on precedence: This would be modeled after the federal Farm to School program.

3) Provide a “Signing Bonus” for Newly Eligible Seniors Following the “SSI-Cashout”

Earmark state funding to incentivize CalFresh participation by newly eligible seniors by providing funding for all newly enrolled seniors from SSI-Cashout implementation to get one time supplement to their CalFresh benefits of \$100.

One-time Cost to State

\$37 million*

Actual expense would be based on number of eligible seniors who both signed up for CalFresh and the additional one-time benefit covered by state. Estimated 375,000\$100

4) Support Farmers Markets Participation and Access for Seniors.

Invest in a competitive grants for farmers market associations and advocates funding: seating; shade/rain structures; transportation subsidies; tours; and promotion of nutrition assistance programs as part of wrap-around services for seniors. House at the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Farm to Fork with 15 grants of up to \$100k each.

Annual Cost to State:

\$1.5 million

Other Ideas we hope to see explored further as the Master Plan for Aging advances:

5) Improve promotion of Disaster-CalFresh for eligible seniors including those for whom English is a second language.

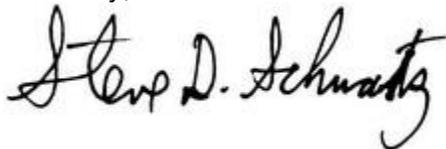
6) Raise the Minimum CalFresh Benefit for seniors by supplementing federal \$'s with state \$'s

7) Facilitate CalFresh on-line purchasing for seniors with limited access to transportation.

8) Provide a nutrition incentive and/or food support that serves seniors up to 200% of fed Poverty level. This could be based on the Summer Meal program for kids that get EBT card, so parents can purchase for them.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations! Of course we would be happy to discuss them in greater detail as appropriate. We look forward to participating in the development of the Master Plan for Aging over the coming months.

Sincerely,



Steve Schwartz, Executive Director

Note: This was also submitted as Comments through the <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MPAPledge> form.