ORGANIZATION LOGO

March XX, 2019

The Honorable Jose Medina

Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

California State Assembly

1020 N Street, Room 173

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 612 (Weber): Access to CalFresh – Restaurant Meals Program**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Medina:

The **ORGANIZATION strongly supports AB 612** by Assemblymember Weber, legislation which would increase access to CalFresh. The bill authorizes the Department of Social Services to enter into a statewide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Chancellor’s Office to permit colleges with eligible facilities to accept EBT cards (CalFresh) at their campus cafeterias and restaurants. Ab 612 will save institutions time and resources, provide the opportunity for all colleges to qualify as an approved vendor for Cal Fresh, regardless if their county offers the program, and increase access to food aid.

The CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is intended to provide a place for low-income individuals to utilize their CalFresh dollars to obtain fresh, healthy food. Twenty-two percent of our students have cited food insecurity as a reason for dropping out of college and many cite the experience of having to choose between books or food as influencing how many classes they take.

The process to become an authorized SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) retailer and accept EBT cards on campus is long, bureaucratic and requires negotiating agreements with various agencies, including county, state and federal agencies. Colleges must negotiate agreements with their county, California’s Department of Social Services and the United States Department of Agriculture. This can take up to two years and colleges must utilize scarce staff time and resources to become a vendor.

Additionally, colleges that are located in a county that does not offer this program are not eligible to participate, even if they are willing to dedicate the resources to apply to become an approved vendor. Currently, over 60 of our colleges are located in a county that does not offer the RMP.

By creating a statewide MOU under which colleges can elect to participate, AB 612 (Weber) will increase access to CalFresh for basic needs insecure students. For these reasons, we urge your support of AB 612. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

cc:

Members, Assembly Higher Education Committee

Jeanice Warden Washington, Chief Consultant, Assembly Higher Education Committee