

Author Full Name : Kellie Flores**Received Date :** 01/22/2024 06:09 PM**Comments Received :**

The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), a non-profit association with 41 member food banks across California and GRACE/End Child Poverty in California, an organization that works to end child poverty in California appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on USDA's Comment Request - How Have SNAP State Agencies Shifted Operations in the Aftermath of COVID-19 Study. OMB Control Number: 0584-NEW.

Food insecurity in California remains nearly double the pre-pandemic levels and is rising. Today, one in four households in California are facing food insecurity, with deep disparities for communities of color. With the ending of SNAP Emergency Allotments in March of 2023 and the ending of Pandemic-EBT, California has lost one-third of its food safety net, putting a severe strain on families facing hunger.

We appreciate that FNS is taking this important opportunity to assess what did and did not work during the COVID-19 emergency as well as consider the lessons learned to inform continued program improvement and increase preparedness for future disruptions that affect service delivery.

In addition to our specific comments, we strongly encourage the inclusion and prioritization of input from stakeholders to ensure lived expertise is equitably centered and included. This should include, but not be limited to, SNAP participants, outreach and application assisters, and the merit workforce. In addition, feedback from County administrators, not just state governments and tribes, should be included as they provide unique insight into the successes and learnings during the pandemic response.

Attached, we outline a number of operational changes made in response to the pandemic that made a significant impact on hunger and poverty in California that we urge be made permanent.