

McGuire bill expands food, nutrition benefits for Native American residents

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Native Americans have historically faced some of the highest rates of poverty, food insecurity, and chronic health conditions here in the Golden State and throughout America.

To ensure that Native American families and children have expanded access to fresh and nutritious food, Senate Majority Leader Mike McGuire advanced SB 1413 this year, which will significantly increase the amount of food assistance for Native American households facing food insecurity.

Through state budget negotiations, McGuire has incorporated SB 1413 into the budget along with a permanent \$5 million in funding, which will forever expand the benefits of California's Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to eligible Native American households.

Currently, income-eligible Native American households cannot access CalFresh if they already participate in the USDA's Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

The federal program, however, does not provide for nearly the same value of food: In 2022, FDPIR budgeted \$91.20 per participant per month, while CalFresh allocated \$164.28—a difference of more than 80%.

“This is a major victory to combat hunger in Native American communities up and down the Golden State. We know Native Americans continue to face the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the state and

this is simply unacceptable. With this action and permanent funding secured, California will align our values with our policies by making sure that Native American families and seniors get the nutritional benefits they deserve,” said Senator McGuire.

With this funding agreement, the combined total benefits to households using FDPIR will be the same as the amount provided to a CalFresh-eligible household.

“Our people can no longer rely on our land for all of our needs and this action will ensure that many Yurok families, who are also California citizens, will have enough food and resources to thrive,” said Yurok Tribe Chairman Joseph James.

“We want to thank Senator McGuire for introducing this important legislation and finding funding to support the program, which is about providing resources to those who need it most.”

McGuire said, “We’re truly grateful for the partnership of the Yurok Tribe and Tribal Governments throughout the state in this critical legislation. This has been 100% teamwork.”

The budget bills will be voted on by the legislature this week and will then be sent to the governor for final approval.