

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1734 (Stefani) – As Introduced February 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Count Hunger Act

SUMMARY: Requires the State Department of Public Health to establish a two-year pilot program with the University of California, Los Angeles to properly fund and conduct the annual California Health Interview Survey with a specified set of questions on food insecurity.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Count Hunger Act.
- 2) Defines, for purpose of the County Hunger Act, the following terms:
 - a) “California Health Interview Survey” or “CHIS” to mean the statewide health survey administered by University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in collaboration with state departments and other agencies. California Health Interview Survey is conducted annually through interviews with thousands of households in the state. This California Health Interview Survey topics include various health matters, including, but not limited to: use of and access to health care, health conditions and behaviors, and a range of topics that influence a person’s health. The range of topics include public program participation, housing, income and employment, climate change, access to food, gun violence, and adverse childhood experiences.
- 3) Authorizes the California Department of Public Health to establish a two-year pilot program with UCLA to ensure the sets of questions linked to food insecurity in the 2025 California Health Interview Survey are included, funded, and covered in the California Health Interview Survey for two years following the implementation of the pilot.
- 4) Requires the California Health Interview Survey to apply the food insecurity questions as described in (3) to all sampled households of the survey, whose income is at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty level.
- 5) Requires UCLA, in collaboration with the California Department of Public Health, to publish any available statewide, regional, and county level data linked to the food insecurity portion of the California Health Interview Survey. UCLA will post the data on the ASKCHIS reporting tool of the CHIS internet website in a manner accessible to the public. The data will be reported in a manner that excludes personally identifiable information.
- 6) Subjects the implementation of the pilot program described above to appropriation by the Legislature for the intended purpose of the pilot program.
- 7) Subjects the involvement of UCLA upon the Regents of the University of California (UC) by resolution adopting provisions to permit UCLA’s involvement in the pilot program.
- 8) Clarifies the two-year pilot program will commence for the 2027 and 2028 calendar year or in the two subsequent calendar years after the pilot program is funded by the Legislature.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes a state policy that every human being has the right to access sufficient affordable and healthy food. The policy defines food insecurity as the occasional or constant lack of access to the amount of food a person needs to live a healthy life. The policy further defines food insecurity as the uncertainty of being able to acquire enough food to meet the needs of a person or a household due to insufficient funds or resources. Requires all state agencies to consider this state policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria when the policy, regulation, or grant pertains to the distribution of sufficient affordable food. The policy does not expand the obligation of the state to provide food or nutrition assistance or to require the expenditure of additional resources to develop food infrastructures (Welfare and Institutions Code Section 18700).
- 2) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents and grants the Regents full powers of organization and governance subject only to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with terms of its endowments, and the statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property, and the purchase of materials, goods, and services (Article IX, Section (9) (a) of the California Constitution).
- 3) Establishes the distinctive and differentiated mission and functions of California's public and independent segments and their respective institutions of higher education. Specifically, the UC may provide undergraduate and graduate instruction in the liberal arts and sciences and the profession, including teaching professions. The UC will have exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education over the professions of law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. The UC will be the primary state-supported academic agency for research (Education code Section 66010.4, Subdivision (c)).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: Double *referral*. AB 1734 (Stefani) was heard by the Assembly Committee on Health on March 17, 2025, where it passed a vote of 16 - 0.

Author's intent. As stated by the author, "this bill will create a pilot to restore funding to the California Health Interview Survey's food insecurity questionnaire, an existing survey which asks up to 25,000 Californians questions to understand the unmet needs in our communities. This bill also accounts for the high cost of living in California by increasing the threshold in which food insecurity questions are asked to respondents from 200% FPL to 400% FPL. Hunger doesn't disappear when you stop measuring it, it just becomes easier to ignore."

University of California (UC). The ten-campus UC system was created in 1886 with the passing of the Organic Act in California.¹ As a public trust, the UC Board of Regents has full power of the organization and governance of the system and therefore enjoys autonomy from the State Legislature. The UC Regents have the authority to:

- 1) Establish and spend the UC budget;
- 2) Decide the type of majors to be taught;

¹ <https://www.library.ca.gov/crb/quick-hits/uc-history/origin/>

- 3) Establish new campuses;
- 4) Determine academic and administrative appointments and promotions; and,
- 5) Set student tuition and fees.¹

Despite constitutional autonomy, the State still has authority over the funds it provides to the UC. Specifically, if the State provides specific allocations for specific purposes, the UC is obligated to expend and fulfill the purpose the monies were allocated to accomplish.

AB 1734 (Stefani) preserves the constitutional autonomy of the UC in two ways: (1) the measure permits the enactment of a two-year pilot upon appropriation; and (2) conditioning UCLA's involvement in the pilot program upon the approval of the UC Regents.

UCLA and the California Health Interview Survey. UCLA located in Los Angeles, California is a flagship campus for the UC. UCLA is a globally recognized postsecondary education leader in academics, research, healthcare, and athletics.² UCLA currently enrolls 33,534 undergraduate students, 13,898 graduate students, and 1,581 interns and residents in medicine and dentistry.³ UCLA's Center for Health Policy and Research annual conducts the California Health Interview Survey (survey). The survey is considered a "leading source of credible and comprehensive data on the health and health care needs of California's large and diverse population."⁴ The purpose of the survey is to provide actionable data elements to decisionmakers to help target funding, programs, and resources to improve the health outcomes for all Californians.

The survey is conducted either online or via the telephone to more than 20,000 households in seven different languages. Each survey covers a wide range of health topics including:

"access to and use of health care, health insurance, health status, health conditions (asthma, diabetes, cancer, etc.), health behaviors (smoking, alcohol use, diet, etc.), public program participation (Medi-Cal, food stamps, CalWorks, etc.), mental health, oral health, immigrant health, intimate partner violence, food, childcare and school, employment, income, discrimination, and much more. Many core questions are repeated in each survey in order to measure significant shifts over time. New questions are also added each survey year to address emerging concerns that are important for planning and policy development. Over the last few years, CHIS has added a series of questions on COVID-19, gun violence, housing, climate change, encounters with police, adverse childhood experiences, and much more."⁵

The survey contains data from households within all 58 counties in California. The results from the survey are available on a free online tool that allows a person to customize or disaggregate the data by city, county, zip code, and legislative district.⁶ Each year UCLA publishes a report with a narration of the data collected by the survey. The latest report from 2025, included topics

² <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/ucla-fast-facts>

³ <https://apb.ucla.edu/campus-statistics/enrollment>

⁴ <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/california-health-interview-survey-chis/about-chis>

⁵ <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/california-health-interview-survey-chis/about-chis> - What health topics are covered by CHIS?

⁶ <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/askchis> and <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/askchis-ne>

on the access to childcare, mental health services, healthcare access, the rise of hate in California, and the adverse impacts to being exposed to wildfires.⁷

Need for the measure. According to the author's office, the California Department for Public Health has indicated that the funding for the survey is not confirmed, specifically for the food insecurity questions. The author has expressed there is a need to not only maintain the data collected by the survey for food insecurity, but to expand the data pool from those households identifying at 200% below the poverty line to those who are at or below 400% of the poverty line. The author has submitted a budget request to fund the food insecurity questions and expand the range of households from 200% to 400% FPL.

Furthermore, in September 2025 the U.S. Department of Agriculture cancelled national studies on food insecurity.⁸ With a cut in the national collection of data on food insecurity, it is imperative California preserve a survey that not only produces credible and actionable data on food insecurity, but to ensure the data encapsulates all those who are experiencing food insecurity by California's definitions.

Arguments in support. As the co-sponsor of the Legislation, the California Association of Food Banks, expresses the need for the measure as "until recently, the annual Current Population Survey – Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS) provided crucial insight on food insecurity for the nation and individual states. It asked key questions about food security status (including childhood food insecurity), use of food programs such as SNAP and WIC, barriers to food security, and socioeconomic data such as race, ethnicity, and income. This survey informed critical research and policy decisions, including datasets like Map the Meal Gap, and its longstanding nature enabled us to track food security trends over time and assess policy impacts. Unfortunately, in October 2025, the Trump administration canceled the national survey for this year and all future years. The CHIS study, unique to California, has been a valuable supplement alongside the CPS-FSS. Conducted annually by UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research, CHIS also measures food security and it is able to reach several Asian and Latine subpopulations that the USDA survey could not. It also enabled analyses of the relationships between food security and health or social conditions, as well as comparisons of counties and regions within the state. Yet in early January 2026, it was announced that funding to conduct the food insecurity screener by CHIS was also cut, resulting from the loss of SNAP Ed funding. This removes a second key source of data on food security in California."

The California Association of Food Banks, further contends, "it is imperative that we not only bring back the ability of CHIS to measure food security but also expand the range of households sampled from 200% up to 400% of FPL. The Brookings Institution estimates that one-third of all food-insecure households have incomes over 200% FPL, and a USDA study shows that households earning more than 1.85 times the federal poverty threshold make up about 20% of all food-insecure households (Brookings Institution). This means many families earning nearly twice the 200% FPL benchmark, or roughly \$128,000 for a family of four, still struggle. By funding and expanding CHIS to include households up to 400% FPL, California would retain the tools needed to better understand and combat food insecurity for a larger share of the population at risk."

⁷ <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/publications/california-health-interview-survey-chis-2025-making-impact>

⁸ <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/09/20/usda-terminates-redundant-food-insecurity-survey>

Requested clarifying amendment. To make it clear that UCLA is only required to publish data online if funding is provided to UCLA, *the Committee has suggested, and the Author has agreed to the following amendment:*

1) Amends Section 28050, subdivision (c), paragraph (1) to read as follows:

(c) (1) UCLA, in collaboration with the department and *upon receipt of funding pursuant to subdivision (d)*, shall publish any available statewide-, regional-, and county-level data, as feasible, that are linked to the food insecurity portion described in subdivision (a). UCLA shall post those data on the AskCHIS reporting tool of the CHIS internet website in a manner accessible to the public.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

AARP

Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco

California Association of Food Banks

California Food and Farming Network

California Food Recovery Coalition

California Immigrant Policy Center

Californians Against Waste

Californians for Ssi

Children's Council of San Francisco

City and County of San Francisco

Community Action Marin

Doordash

Edgewood Center for Children and Families

Extrafood

Five Keys

Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County

Glad Tidings Church — assemblies of God

Glide

Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

Justice in Aging

Los Angeles Regional Food Bank

Marin County Board of Supervisors

Marin Food Policy Council

Menorah Park

Mission Language Vocational School

Napa County

North Marin Community Services

Nourish California

Ritter Center

San Francisco-marin Food Bank

Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

Stopwaste
The Richmond Neighborhood Center

Opposition

None on file.

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