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Just 70% of those who qualify for CalFresh (California's SNAP program) food assistance in California receive benefits, while the average is 83% nationwide. This makes California the state with the fourth lowest CalFresh participation rate among the eligible population in the nation (Mathematica Policy Research, 6). Participation in SNAP is linked to reduced healthcare costs, improved public health outcomes, decreased food insecurity, and reduced poverty rates (Carlson). For Californians to get the full benefits of federal food assistance, policy changes on the state level to increase the state SNAP participation rate is essential, and of particular concern is reforming the currently decentralized state of CalFresh.

California's version of the federal SNAP food assistance program is unique in its decentralized administration, in which SNAP is primarily administered by county governments rather than the state government. This decentralized model of administration causes administrative costs to be shared between county, state, and federal governments, and correlates with relatively high administrative costs, with California having the second highest per-capita administrative costs in the United States at \$68.52, over twice the national average of \$29.98 (Elkaramany). While in California the administrative burden for SNAP is primarily held by county governments, the costs are dispersed between county, state, and federal governments. This means that while counties have primary control over how CalFresh is administered, they only pay 15% of the administrative costs, and lack much of the incentive to cut administrative bloat and costs found in more centralized programs in which the organization in charge of administration bears most of the cost (Elkaramany). While in many other states, reduction in the bureaucracy individuals are required to interact with to participate in SNAP has both reduced

administrative costs, and made it easier to receive benefits (Pinard), California has reversed this trend within the state through a hybrid administration of state and county agencies. While some statewide changes, such as the GetCalFresh.Org website being updated to improve user accessibility and experience have been implemented, there are still many barriers for county governments to reach underserved communities, especially when there is a language barrier (McCarthy).

Policy changes within the decentralized CalFresh program primarily originate within county governments, and while this allows some county governments to independently alter policy to be more responsive to changing circumstances without being directed to by statewide legislation (Botts), it can also cause some counties to lag behind others, either due to misaligned policy priorities, or a lack of direction from state government. The overall result of this decentralized administration policy is higher administrative costs, with worse outreach outcomes, in which underequipped and disincentivized county governments in charge of policy reform to solve these issues (Elkaramany, McCarty).

A more centralized CalFresh administration would eliminate disincentives for administrators to reduce administrative costs, while creating further incentives for state government to intervene in favor of higher CalFresh participation rates. Because of current low enrollment Californians miss out on \$1.8 billion in federal government assistance in 2016 (Botts), and a concerted statewide effort as seen in states with high SNAP enrollment such as Oregon, made possible by further centralization would be key to helping needy Californians receive this aid.

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