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Brad Lewis is served a bowl of 15 bean soup during Empty Bowls at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano in Fairfield, Saturday, Oct. 12, 2019. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

# Food bank: Latest cut to CalFresh will increase hunger in Solano County

By **Daily Republic Staff**

FAIRFIELD — The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano issued a harsh response Wednesday to a federal government ruling the food banks says will

significantly cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps and as CalFresh in California.

The plan, announced Wednesday, will limit states from exempting work-eligible adults from having to maintain steady employment in order to receive benefits.

Work-eligible able-bodied adults without dependents and between the ages of 18 and 49 can currently receive only three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period if they don't meet the 20-hour work requirement. But states with high unemployment rates or a demonstrable lack of sufficient jobs can waive those time limits.

Changes to the rule will make it more difficult for states to grant such waivers.

The rule, which goes into effect in April, will affect 700,000 of California's most disenfranchised residents, the biggest cut to food assistance since the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, said a press release from the food bank.

"Hunger impedes any human's ability to focus, work and thrive . . . when any one person in our neighborhood is hungry, our entire community feels the impact. This cut to CalFresh not only eliminates current participants from receiving CalFresh benefits but it also places harmful restrictions on the entire CalFresh eligibility process," said Cassidie Carmen Bates, policy and advocacy manager at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, in the press release.

Bates wrote the people the rule targets already face well-documented barriers to work, such as lack of access to adequate transportation and affordable housing, criminal records that make it difficult to qualify for jobs, and undiagnosed physical and mental illnesses.

"These are members of our community that we should support, not make hungrier and more vulnerable by taking their vital food benefits away," she wrote.

The food bank noted in Solano County, 12.6 percent of residents experience hunger; the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano serves 178,000 community members each month, the food bank reports. More than 11 percent of Californians experience food insecurity.

"For every meal provided by California's food banks, CalFresh provides nine," the release said. "There is simply no way that California's statewide network of food banks will be able to fill the gap to food access that this rule change will create."

The rule change is pending a 60-day waiting period.

The food bank encourages CalFresh participants and concerned community members concerned to call 1-925-849-8361 and visit [www.foodbankccs.org/abawd](http://www.foodbankccs.org/abawd).