



SUMMARY

This bill enacts legislation that would, on and after July 1, 2025, make medically supportive food and nutrition services a covered benefit for all eligible beneficiaries under the Medi-Cal program, as specified.

BACKGROUND

Medically Supportive Food and Nutrition (MSF&N) refers to a spectrum of interventions that provide nutrient rich whole food, to prevent, manage or reverse diet-sensitive health conditions to improve patients’ health. The spectrum of medically supportive food and nutrition interventions includes: medically tailored meals, medically supportive meals, food pharmacies, medically tailored groceries, medically supportive groceries, produce prescriptions and nutrition supports when paired with food provision.

Across California, numerous organizations have piloted these interventions, also commonly known as “food as medicine” programs. Evaluations from those programs, and others nationally, show that they improve health and reduce avoidable healthcare spending.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law establishes the Medi-Cal program, which is administered by the State Department of Health Care Services and under which qualified low-income individuals receive health care services. The Medi-Cal program is, in part, governed and funded by federal Medicaid program provisions.

Current law requires the department to establish the Medically Tailored Meals Pilot Program and the Short-Term Medically Tailored Meals Intervention Services Program, to operate in specified counties and during limited periods for the purpose of providing medically tailored meal

intervention services to eligible Medi-Cal beneficiaries with certain health conditions, including congestive heart failure, cancer, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or renal disease.

In addition, existing law, subject to implementation of the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative, authorizes a Medi-Cal managed care plan to elect to cover community supports approved by the department as cost effective and medically appropriate in a comprehensive risk contract that are in lieu of applicable Medi-Cal state plan services. Under existing law, community supports that the department is authorized to approve include, among other things, medically supportive food and nutrition services, including medically tailored meals.

PROBLEM

Too many Californians, particularly Californians of color, are living with largely preventable chronic conditions. Adequate food and nutrition are a fundamental part of preventing and treating chronic conditions, and can significantly improve a patient's quality of life and health status while also reducing healthcare costs.

SOLUTION

To improve health outcomes, reduce avoidable healthcare spending and increase health equity for Medi-Cal beneficiaries, California must add medically supportive food and nutrition interventions as covered benefits in Medi-Cal.

SUPPORT

- SPUR (co-sponsor)
- Food as Medicine Collaborative (co-sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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