



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/9/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Executive's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Christina Rivera, 565-2241

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Federal Administration Community Impacts

Recommended Action:

- A) Concur with County Executive to pause on issuing an Emergency Declaration; and
- B) Receive update on Cal-Fresh and Food Assistance efforts.

Executive Summary:

On November 4, 2025, the Board directed staff to return with a Local Emergency Proclamation (Proclamation) to address community impacts primarily stemming from the recent federal government shutdown.

Additionally, the Board asked staff to develop a Proclamation that could be used to address future potential impacts resulting from the 2025 federal law, or H.R. 1, anticipated to tighten access to safety-net programs, including Medicaid/Medical, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also known as CalFresh which is the California's version of the federal food stamp program.

The most recent federal government shutdown ended on November 12, 2025, with Congress passing a Continuing Resolution (CR) which funds SNAP (CalFresh), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Veterans Affairs, military construction, and Congress through the full federal fiscal year ending on September 30, 2026. All other federal agencies are funded through January 30, 2026. CalFresh benefits started going out to recipients, and everyone received their full benefits by November 10, 2025.

Therefore, the County Executive recommends pausing the issue of an Emergency Declaration at this time. Similarly, as there is no immediate emergency, as defined in the [Emergency Services Act](https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Legal-Affairs/Cal-OES-Yellow-Book.pdf), [<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Legal-Affairs/Cal-OES-Yellow-Book.pdf>](https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Legal-Affairs/Cal-OES-Yellow-Book.pdf) related to programmed federal policy changes associated with H.R.1, including the County's role in indigent healthcare (see Attachment 1). The CEO will, with the support and data from the County's Health and Human Services Departments, continue state advocacy efforts and engage community partners, such as with Federally Qualified Health Clinics and the County Medical Services Program, to identify implementable mitigation measures.

Discussion:

Federal Shutdown and Cal-Fresh

The most recent federal government shutdown ended on November 12, 2025, when Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) that funds federal operations through January 30, 2026. SNAP (CalFresh), the USDA, Veterans Affairs, military construction, and Congress are funded for the full federal fiscal year (through September 30, 2026). All other federal agencies are funded through January 30, 2026. As such, there is a possibility of another shutdown if Congress does not pass required appropriations bills by the deadline.

On November 7, 2025, CalFresh benefits started going out to recipients, and all beneficiaries received their full benefits by November 10, 2025. Given that the federal government shutdown ended on November 12, 2025, there are no expected immediate new impacts to the CalFresh program. As noted, CalFresh benefits are expected to be available through September 30th, 2026, regardless of next steps related to the Continuing Resolution through January 30, 2026.

Additionally, as directed by the Board on November 4, 2025, staff is in the process of executing a contract agreement with the Redwood Empire Food Bank (REFB) retroactively from October 1, 2025, through January 31, 2026, for an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000. The contract duration will provide reimbursement support to the food bank associated with increased demand which occurred in the month of October and November due to anticipated delayed CalFresh benefits, as well as December in which families may continue to visit the food bank during high demand holiday season. The term ending in January allows for reconciliation of expenses after the close of the month of December.

Other Updates:

- As provided to the Board on November 4, First 5 Sonoma County contacted the Human Services Department (HSD) with interest in providing gift cards to CalFresh beneficiary families with children under the age of 6. Given that benefits were subsequently fully paid, First 5 decided to hold on this initiative.
- During a special Board meeting on November 7, 2025, the Board considered providing additional delegated authority to the County Executive for district-specific food assistance partnership agreements, in addition to the support provided to the REFB. Given that CalFresh benefits began to be released that day, your Board decided to not take further action. However, the Board did direct staff to continue to consider food security and access programs should the situation and community needs shift. To that end, it is relevant to document here that the County, through the Department of Emergency Management, currently has emergency food contracts in place with Ceres, Sonoma Family Meal, and SLSCO LTD in order to provide food assistance, including prepared and delivered meals, during emergencies and which can be activated when the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated. Staff recommends that should food access become an issue in the future, the County pursue these agreements first, given the proven efficacy and scalable nature.

Local Emergency Proclamation

The California Emergency Services Act mandates that local jurisdictions develop emergency plans and allows local governing bodies to issue orders and regulations to protect life and property. The primary purpose of a Proclamation is to position the County to access state or federal immediate response and recovery programs and funding. If the State or Federal government declares an emergency for the same event, a local

proclamation allows the County to request reimbursement-such as from FEMA-for eligible emergency costs. Currently, neither the State nor Federal government has declared an emergency related to federal administration or policy impacts. Therefore, a local proclamation alone would not result in State or Federal reimbursement.

In addition, a Proclamation unlocks emergency authorities that the County normally cannot use during regular operations, such as the following examples:

Emergency Powers of the Director of Emergency Services	Emergency Purchasing and Contracting by temporarily bypassing normal competitive bidding rules.
Quickly secure emergency supplies, equipment, or services	Centrally mobilize all County departments to support the emergency response
Augment capacity by engaging Emergency Staffing and adjusting work schedules	Reassigning County employees work duties to become Disaster Service Workers

Other elements to consider when proclaiming a local emergency are:

Duration. Proclaiming now-before a large-scale event has occurred-could create a long period of emergency status. State law requires the Board to reconsider and renew a proclamation every 60 days.

Eviction Moratorium. Under Sonoma County Code Chapter 4, Article IX - Residential Tenancy Protections Ordinance, the Board may activate certain tenant protections if it declares or ratifies a local emergency. These protections can be applied County-wide or, under amendments adopted August 26, 2025, they may also be applied to specific geographic areas experiencing localized impacts.

Adopted Financial Policies. The Board may need to temporarily waive its current fiscal policy of not backfilling State or Federal funded programs -within pre-established parameters-if the County chooses to sustain critical safety-net programs during a prolonged federal funding gap.

See Expenditure & Management Control section of the currently approved Board Financial Policies.

<https://sonomacounty.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/county-administrators-office/budget-and-operations/financial-policies>

In sum, given the absence of concrete circumstances that would require issuing orders and regulations to protect life and property, the undefined emergency event, and unknown duration, the County Executive Officer recommends not issuing a Local Emergency Proclamation at this time. Nonetheless, County staff will continue monitor and collect data on federal actions to develop policy options for the Board's consideration, many of which the CEO anticipates will be addressed and/or mechanized via the FY 2026/2027 recommended budget.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Agenda Date: 12/9/2025

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

11/04/2025 - The Board directed staff to return in 12/09/2025 with options to Proclaim a Local emergency as a result of federal government policy impacts.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

There are no fiscal impacts related to this informational update.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - County Indigent Care Fact Sheet

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None.