



Fiscal Year 2023 Budget and Appropriations Priorities

March 2022

The federal nutrition programs are a critical safety net for tens of millions of struggling households — including individuals of all ages — by helping them put food on the table during times of need. Investing in hunger prevention and relief makes good fiscal sense. Hunger increases health care costs, lowers worker productivity, harms children’s development, and diminishes students’ educational attainment. These negative impacts can be minimized with robust funding and support for the federal nutrition programs.

Even before COVID-19, more than 35 million people in the United States were living in households experiencing food insecurity. Moreover, the harsh and disparate impacts on food security, economic well-being, health and racial equity threaten to last well beyond the end of the COVID-19 pandemic health emergency declaration.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. It responds quickly and efficiently to changes in need, whether due to local or national economic downturns or natural disasters. As conditions improve, SNAP caseloads fall. COVID-19 increased need dramatically, and SNAP responded quickly and efficiently to serve more customers.

[Compared with the pre-pandemic month of February 2020, SNAP caseloads in April and June 2020 grew by more than 4.1 million persons and 6.2 million persons, respectively.](#)

SNAP benefits are targeted to the most vulnerable. An estimated 85 percent of all SNAP benefits go to households with a child, older adult, or person with a disability. SNAP households have very low incomes. Indeed, the average SNAP household has a gross income

of only \$872 per month, which is just 70 percent of the federal poverty level.

SNAP has a positive impact on the economy. Each \$1 in SNAP benefit during a downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity. These dollars flow through all parts of the food supply chain — from farmers and food manufacturers to truckers, food retailers, and store employees.

Unfortunately, SNAP benefits are inadequate to maintain a healthy diet throughout the month. When temporary COVID-19 SNAP supplements end, the average SNAP benefit will be only about \$5.50 a person a day. Benefit inadequacy has serious consequences: research has linked diminished food budgets later in the month with a drop-off in caloric intake, lower school performance, and an increase in hospitalizations for low-income adults due to low blood sugar.

Congress should take these steps to protect and improve SNAP:

- strengthen SNAP permanently by basing benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan, removing the cap on the shelter deduction, increasing the minimum benefit level, and better accounting for out-of-pocket medical expenses incurred by SNAP participants who are older or have disabilities;
- promote equity, including by eliminating SNAP time limits and improving SNAP access for college students, immigrants, former drug felons, and families working their way up the economic ladder; and
- provide such sums as are necessary to ensure continuity of SNAP operations and benefits, and ensure SNAP can operate in October 2022 in the event of a shutdown at the start of the fiscal year.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- **TEFAP Commodities:** Congress should provide **\$400 million** for TEFAP food purchases as authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill to provide emergency food assistance to people in need. Nutritious TEFAP foods are an essential resource for local emergency food providers, which combine government commodities with privately donated foods to maximize TEFAP benefits far beyond the budgeted amount for the program.
- **TEFAP Storage and Distribution and Infrastructure Funds:** Congress should support the work of America's charitable food system by providing full funding for the TEFAP storage and distribution account (**\$100 million**), the TEFAP Infrastructure Grants program (**\$15 million**), and funding to support critical food bank capacity and equipment needs through member-directed spending projects. Currently, appropriated funds in the fiscal year 2021 have only covered approximately 36 percent of the costs of handling TEFAP commodities.

Child Nutrition Programs

Child nutrition programs play a critical role in helping children, especially in families with low incomes, achieve access to quality nutrition, child care, and education and enrichment activities, while improving their overall health, development, and school achievement.

As Congress considers the reauthorization of the child nutrition programs this year, it is vital for there to be a significant new investment to ensure that critical program improvements are possible.

In addition to maintaining robust eligibility structures, Congress should take key actions in the child nutrition programs, including what's listed below.

- **School Meals:** Preserve the improvements made in school meals access, nutrition standards, and the overall school nutrition environment. Congress should provide **\$10 million** for school meals direct certification grants to reduce paperwork for schools and **\$100 million** in school equipment grants to enable school districts to build their capacity to prepare healthier and more cost-efficient meals on site.
- **Summer Meals:** Provide **\$100 million** to continue the current and expanded Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Demonstration Projects to ensure that children in rural and underserved areas have access to nutrition during the summer.
- **Team Nutrition:** Provide **\$25 million** for Team Nutrition funding, the primary resource for promoting healthy eating and nutrition education in child nutrition programs. These funds assist schools, child care centers and homes, and community-based sponsoring organizations to successfully implement healthier meal patterns.
- **Child Care Meals:** Continue to provide **\$10 million** for the Child and Adult Care Food Program's (CACFP) nutrition and wellness education and program efforts. These funds are crucial for supporting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) important role in providing materials, training, and support to state agencies and program operators to bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):** Fund WIC at \$6.3 billion to serve anticipated caseloads while accounting for the rising costs of delivering high-quality nutrition services. Included in the WIC appropriation should be set-aside for WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (**\$90 million**), infrastructure and technical assistance (**\$14 million**), and management information systems (**\$75 million**).
- **WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP):** Support FMNP at **\$30 million**. FMNP provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.
- **Farm to School and Early Care and Education:** Provide **\$12 million** to support farm to school efforts and to continue expanding farm to early care and education activities. Farm to school and early care and education is an effective way to support local farmers while enhancing access to quality produce for children.
- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC):** Provide **\$2.5 billion** for the program, which is the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

Older Adults Nutrition Programs

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):** Maintain the current **\$375 million** in total funding for CSFP. The funding is needed to provide the necessary flexibility to maintain caseloads and to provide for responsible expansion to meet the needs of older adults who are struggling with hunger.
- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (SFMNP):** Support SFMNP at **\$21 million**. SFMNP provides low-income seniors with coupons for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
- **Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs for Older Adults and Native American Communities:** The home-delivered meal and congregate nutrition programs are important sources of nutrition for older adults in many communities around the country. Funding must be increased in order to keep up with the escalating demand for services.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

FDPIR provides USDA food to low-income household members, including older adults who are living on Native American lands, and Native American families residing in nearby designated areas.

- Congress should provide
 - **\$200 million** for administrative costs and food purchases that are consistent with prior fiscal years;

- the fully authorized amount of **\$5 million** for demonstration projects for tribal organizations to enter into self-determination contracts to procure foods for FDPIR packages;
- **\$5 million** for FDPIR traditional foods market development; and
- Authorization and funding to allow participants to receive both FDPIR and SNAP at the same time.

Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)

- Provide authorization and funding for Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to transition from NAP to full participation in SNAP. The choice of and path toward transition should be approved by the territories' leadership.

Congressional Hunger Center

- **Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program:** Congress should fund this fellowship program at its authorized level of **\$2 million**. Since 1994, Congressional funding has enhanced the impact of local, state, and national anti-hunger efforts as well as the work of nonprofits, government agencies, and faith-based organizations, by the research, analysis, and policy work conducted by the Fellows.