

# Fiscal Year 2027 Budget and Appropriations Priorities for **FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

**THE FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS ARE A CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR TENS OF MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS — PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE DURING TIMES OF NEED.**

Investing in hunger prevention and relief also makes smart fiscal sense.

Hunger increases health care costs, lowers worker productivity, impedes children’s development, and diminishes students’ educational attainment. These impacts can be countered with robust funding and support for federal nutrition programs.



## **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. Unfortunately, SNAP benefits are inadequate to help people maintain a healthy diet throughout the month. SNAP food benefits average about \$6.20 per person a day. 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 due to low blood sugar.

### **Priorities to Strengthen and Protect SNAP**

- ▶ **Contingency funding for a full month of SNAP services and benefits:** To avoid benefit cuts during a funding gap, Congress must appropriate \$8 billion–\$9 billion in a contingency fund that will support a full monthly benefit for 42 million participants.
- ▶ **Reinstate the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Household Food Security report:** USDA will no longer release the Economic Research Service (ERS) Household Food Security report, the gold standard for measuring food security in America. This decision makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of policy decisions on food security and to develop sound policy that reduces food insecurity.
- ▶ **Reject restrictions that threaten SNAP access and choice:** Food choice restriction waivers are harmful and stigmatize our neighbors who receive food assistance. SNAP restrictions also reduce autonomy and mean fewer choices for those who participate in the program. For states, restrictions add expensive new layers of bureaucracy. Retailers, especially small and rural grocers, also suffer as they bear significant costs from implementing these restrictions.

- ▶ **Uphold SNAP’s merit-based staffing:** Merit staff receive extensive training and develop deep knowledge to guide SNAP applicants through the process, conduct SNAP certification interviews, and make final decisions on SNAP eligibility and benefits. Experiments using private contractors have proven to be inefficient and expensive, threatening program integrity and seriously diminishing the program’s access and benefits.
- ▶ **Improve technology:** Criminals are preying on SNAP participants and stealing (“skimming”) their benefits. SNAP participants have no protection from this theft and have no replacement benefits. Congress must provide funding for states to make the transition to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) chip cards.



## **CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

Child nutrition programs provide quality nutrition and help support education, child care, and enrichment activities for children across the country, especially children from families with low incomes. These programs help improve children’s overall health, development, and school achievement.

In addition to maintaining robust eligibility structures, Congress should take the following actions to keep the child nutrition programs strong:

### **School Meals**

- ▶ **Fund equipment grants:** Congress should provide \$35 million in school equipment grants for school districts to build their capacity to prepare healthier and more cost-efficient meals on-site.
- ▶ **Reinstate funding** for local food purchasing for schools and child care.
- ▶ **Farm to School and Early Care and Education:** Provide \$14 million to support farm-to-school efforts and to continue expanding Farm to Early Care and Education settings.

### Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT)

- ▶ Provide \$126 million to waive the administrative match requirements and \$50 million for technology and implementation grants to support states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations.

### 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 providing materials, training, and support to state agencies and program operators to bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.
- ▶ **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.

### Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- ▶ **Fund WIC at a level that will ensure every eligible family who applies for the program can receive the full evidence-based benefits and services.** Appropriators should work with the USDA to monitor trends in participation and food costs to ensure sufficient funding. Included in the WIC appropriation should be full funding for WIC's food packages, including the current cash value benefit (CVB) for the purchase of fruits and vegetables, longstanding set asides for WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (\$180 million), infrastructure and technical assistance (\$16 million), and management information systems to support modernizing the program (\$50 million).
- ▶ **Make flexible service options permanent:** Appropriators should include the bipartisan, bicameral MODERN WIC Act/21st Century WIC Act to keep essential modernizations, including virtual options.
- ▶ **WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP):** Support FMNP at \$20 million. FMNP provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.
- ▶ **Increase the WIC contingency fund** to support WIC operations for a full month to ensure WIC is protected during any future government shutdowns.

### 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)

- ▶ Provide \$2.09 billion for the 21st CCLC program, which is the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

### THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP)

- ▶ **TEFAP commodities:** Provide \$471 million for TEFAP food purchases to provide emergency food assistance to individuals in need. Encourage USDA to increase the supply of TEFAP commodities through additional USDA food purchases beyond the TEFAP baseline.
- ▶ **TEFAP storage and distribution and infrastructure funds:** Provide \$100 million for TEFAP storage and distribution and \$15 million for the TEFAP Rural Infrastructure Grants Program.

### OLDER ADULTS NUTRITION PROGRAMS

- ▶ **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):** Protect and fund CSFP at a level that will provide the flexibility to maintain caseloads and responsible program expansion to serve eligible older adults experiencing food insecurity.
- ▶ **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP):** Provide \$20.6 million for SFMNP to provide seniors with low incomes coupons for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.
- ▶ **Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs:** Provide \$2.285 billion for the OAA programs. The home-delivered meal and congregate nutrition programs are vital sources of nutrition for older adults in communities around the country. Congress must increase funding for these programs to keep up with the escalating demand for services.

### FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS (FDPIR)

- ▶ Provide \$342 million for food purchases and to cover administrative costs, \$5 million for demonstration projects for Tribal organizations to enter into contracts to procure food for FDPIR, and \$5 million for traditional foods market development and authorization, and funding for participants to receive FDPIR and SNAP.

### EMERSON/LELAND HUNGER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

- ▶ Provide \$2 million to encompass the work fellows perform to design, implement, and evaluate nutrition assistance programs in communities across the country.