

Congress Must Protect and Strengthen SNAP and Other Key Anti-Hunger Programs

February 2018

SNAP/Food Stamps:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. SNAP currently helps to put food on the table for more than 41 million low-income participants each month. When the number of families struggling to make ends meet increases, SNAP responds quickly and effectively to meet that need.

SNAP Action Needed

Congress should protect SNAP from harmful policy proposals to alter its structure or cut its funding, which would undermine its efficacy. Instead, Congress should strengthen SNAP by adopting provisions contained in H.R.1276 — The “Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2017” to:

- Base SNAP benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan;
- Boost SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter;
- Boost SNAP benefits for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine (S. 1707);
- Boost the SNAP minimum monthly benefit to \$25 per month; and
- Ensure that jobless adults are offered employment and training opportunities before time-limiting their SNAP benefits.

If SNAP were weakened, many millions of older Americans, people with disabilities, children, veterans, struggling parents — working and unemployed — and others would be harmed. The nation would see more hunger and food insecurity, worse health and educational outcomes, a less productive workforce, and higher health costs.

SNAP Strengths

SNAP DELIVERS ASSISTANCE

quickly and effectively to people recovering from natural disasters or economic crises.



SNAP REACHES KEY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

— the large majority of beneficiaries are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

SNAP REDUCES HUNGER

and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.



SNAP IMPROVES DIETARY INTAKE

and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.

SNAP IS EFFICIENT, using electronic benefits technology and regular channels of commerce.



SNAP SUPPORTS WORK, helping families struggling with low wages.

SNAP BOLSTERS LOCAL ECONOMIES by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.



SNAP LIFTS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE out of poverty.

For more than four decades, SNAP has enjoyed strong bipartisan support and has helped ensure that vulnerable low-income people in our nation can put food on the table. SNAP relieves pressure on overwhelmed food banks, pantries, religious congregations and other emergency food providers across the country, that could not begin to meet the need for food assistance if SNAP eligibility or benefits were reduced.

Despite SNAP's many strengths, benefits are too low. SNAP benefits average less than \$1.39 per person per meal, and recipients struggle to afford an adequate and nutritious diet on a consistent basis.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP):

TEFAP is a means-tested federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to individuals and families in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations such as food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. Nutritious TEFAP food commodities are an essential resource for food banks. As the demand for food remains high at food banks across the country, a reliable and steady stream of emergency food is needed.

TEFAP Action Needed

Include additional mandatory funding for TEFAP food in recognition of the sustained high need for food assistance at food banks nationwide. TEFAP food purchases should be authorized at \$350 million per year in the next Farm Bill. TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds should continue at \$100 million per year and TEFAP Infrastructure Grants should remain at \$15 million per year.

- TEFAP commodities accounted for approximately 16 percent of the food moving through Feeding America's food banks in 2017. Food banks combine TEFAP with private donations to maximize TEFAP benefits far beyond the budgeted amount for the program, exemplifying a model public-private partnership.
- TEFAP bonus commodity purchases provide support for agricultural markets when needed and provide the nation's food banks with access to additional healthy

food. Congress should ensure that USDA retains the authority to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency food relief in addition to times of low commodity prices so the program is responsive to excess supply and demand.

- TEFAP has a strong impact on the farm economy. TEFAP purchases give commodity producers an average of 27 cents per dollar. That rises to 85 cents on the dollar for bonus commodity purchases made when agricultural markets need support, according to USDA's Economic Research Service. By contrast, only about 16 cents of every retail food dollar go back to the farmer.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):

CSFP provides nutritious food boxes to more than 700,000 low-income seniors each month. Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia are scheduled to participate in CSFP in 2018.

CSFP Action Needed

Congress should provide additional funding to expand access nationwide to CSFP and to support program operations to new states with USDA-approved CSFP plans. Congress should also enact S.2085, Nourishing Our Golden Years Act, to improve the CSFP certification process.

- CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity and are at risk for hunger. CSFP food packages play an important role in addressing the nutritional needs of low-income seniors.

Support Policies to Enable Easier Food Donation:

Approximately 70 billion pounds of food do not make it from farm to plate in the United States each year. The Farm Bill should support nonprofits working with agricultural and food industry partners to connect nutritious food to people in need, through streamlined federal policies and exploring innovative ways to further this work.