

## Analysis of House's Updated HEROES Act

On October 1, the House [passed](#) an updated version of the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act (a more robust version passed the House on May 15, 2020). Check out the [legislative text](#), [section-by-section summary](#), and [one-pager](#) from House Democrats, as well as [FRAC's statement](#) on the bill's release.

The comprehensive COVID-19 relief bill provides significant relief for struggling individuals and families. Below is a top-line summary of the nutrition provisions, as well as other provisions and investments designed to address hardship and provide much-needed economic stimulus.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** — The bill provides **\$10 billion** in additional SNAP appropriations to handle increased caseload and related costs attributable to the pandemic. The bill also

- **boosts SNAP maximum benefits and the block grants for Puerto Rico and American Samoa by 15 percent** from November 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021;
- **increases the minimum monthly SNAP benefit** from \$16 to \$30 through September 30, 2021;
- **suspends SNAP time limits** for certain adults and mandatory SNAP Employment and Training until one year after enactment;
- **provides \$200 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and \$100 million for FY 2022 in additional funding for states' SNAP administrative expenses** to manage the increased number of applicants;
- provides that **college students not be barred from accessing SNAP benefits** for lack of work study or job engagement during the pandemic;
- **excludes Pandemic Unemployment Compensation under the [CARES Act](#) as income toward SNAP eligibility and benefit levels** from the month of receipt and the nine months following;
- **permits the purchase of hot foods or hot food products ready for immediate consumption** with SNAP benefits at authorized retail food stores until the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- provides flexibility for **SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed)** in certain situations to assist with the distribution of non-congregate school meals; and
- requires the **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to publicize on its website** any SNAP waiver request related to COVID-19 by state agencies, and the approval or denial of such a request, as well as any state agency request to participate in the SNAP online purchase program.

**Child Nutrition Provisions** (School and Out-of-School Time Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, CACFP) — The bill

- provides **emergency funding to school meals programs and CACFP** sponsors, centers, homes, and afterschool programs to help cover operating-cost deficits created by shutdowns and a shift in services during COVID-19 (at an amount equal to 55 percent of

the amount that the school food authority or CACFP program was reimbursed for meals and snacks that same month in the prior year);

- temporarily **expands the age of eligibility for CACFP at emergency homeless shelters** from 18 to 25 years old;
- requires USDA to **hold harmless** commodity payments, special assistance payments, and state administrative expenses for the 2019–2020 school year;
- provides USDA with waiver authority for the **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** to allow parents to pick up program snacks without their child present, and to receive multiple days of program snacks at once; and
- requires **USDA to publicize on its website child nutrition program waiver requests** by state agencies, approval or denial of the request, guidance related to the waiver, all such documents to date, and those received or issued prior to the bill's enactment.

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

— The bill provides **\$400 million** in additional appropriations to cover increased caseloads and costs attributable to the pandemic. The bill also

- allows USDA to **increase the value of the WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV)** from \$9 for children and \$11 for women per month to \$35 per month for women and children for a four-month period;
- requires USDA to **establish a task force** on streamlining food delivery and remote food purchasing in WIC; and
- requires **USDA to publicize on its website WIC waiver requests** by state agencies, approval or denial of the request, guidance related to the waiver, all such documents to date, and those received or issued prior to the bill's enactment.

**Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs** — The bill provides \$500 million for Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs, including Congregate Meals and Home-Delivered Meals. The bill makes it easier for states receiving federal funds under the Older Americans Act to deliver nutrition services to older adults while practicing social distancing during the public health emergency. It also gives the Administration on Aging the authority to waive federal nutrition standards for organizations that serve older adults with FY 2021 funds.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** — The bill provides \$450 million in additional appropriations for TEFAP.

**Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)** — The bill waives the payment of the non-federal share requirement for FDPIR provided in the CARES Act, and provides USDA with authority to allow Tribal member SNAP households that are unable to access approved retail food stores due to COVID-19 to receive FDPIR.

**Nutrition Assistance for U.S. Territories** — The bill provides \$1.236 billion to Puerto Rico, \$14 million to The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and \$9.1 million to American Samoa for additional nutritional assistance.

**Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)/Child Tax Credit (CTC)** — The bill strengthens EITC and CTC through several provisions, including by temporarily expanding the eligibility and the

amount of the EITC for taxpayers with no qualifying children, and making the \$2,000-per-child CTC fully refundable for calendar year 2020.

**Direct Payments to Households** — The bill provides a second round of direct payments to households, with more substantial payments (\$1,200 per taxpayer and \$500 per dependent). It also allows the payments to be made to an individual who provides an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), rather than a Social Security Number.

**Unemployment Benefits** — The bill restores the weekly federal \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) supplement to state and federal unemployment benefits authorized in the CARES Act, starting on September 6, 2020 and ending on January 31, 2021. The bill also requires federal, state, and local programs that receive any federal funding to disregard FPUC when calculating income in determining eligibility for benefits or assistance, and to exclude it from resource limits for nine months following receipt.

**Funding to State and Local Governments** — The bill provides [assistance to states and localities](#) for COVID-related expenses and to respond to negative economic impacts of COVID (including all states, the District of Columbia, local governments, territories, and tribes). Without strong federal assistance to states and localities, state budget shortfalls will result in deep budget cuts.

**Housing Assistance** — The bill provides tens of billions of dollars in new supports to help renters and homeowners make monthly rent, mortgage and utility payments, and other housing-related costs to help struggling families afford a safe place to live and prevent homelessness.

In addition to the provisions mentioned above, the bill includes other important public health, worker safety, small business, and healthcare provisions that will help struggling individuals and families through the public health and economic hardships resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

Resources:

- House Appropriations Committee [press statement](#) on House Democrats' release of Updated HEROES Act
- Updated HEROES Act [legislative text](#)
- Updated HEROES Act [section-by-section summary](#) from House Democrats
- Updated HEROES Act [one-pager](#) from House Democrats
- FRAC [statement](#) on House Democrats' release of Updated HEROES Act
- FRAC [COVID-19](#) page