



Fiscal Year 2021 Budget and Appropriations Priorities

March 2020

The federal nutrition programs are a critical safety net for millions of struggling households — located in every community across the nation — 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 children’s educational attainment. These negative impacts can be minimized with robust funding and support for the federal nutrition programs.

More than 37 million people in America are living in households that are food insecure. Even as the economy has improved, millions of families have been left behind and need food assistance. Congress should deepen its historically bipartisan commitment to programs that provide food assistance to vulnerable people with low incomes by protecting the structure of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the other federal nutrition programs, and by sufficiently funding them to address the prevailing need.

SNAP

SNAP is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. It responds quickly and effectively to changes in need, whether due to local or national economic downturns or natural disasters. As conditions improve, SNAP caseloads fall. Nationally, SNAP caseloads have been falling for more than five years with 13 million fewer participants in 2019 than in 2013.

SNAP benefits are targeted to the most vulnerable: 85 percent of all SNAP benefits go to households with a child, senior, or person with disabilities; and the average SNAP household has a gross monthly income of \$844, which is just under 63 percent of the federal poverty line. As great as SNAP is, unfortunately, SNAP benefits are inadequate to maintain a healthy diet throughout the month: SNAP benefits average less than \$1.40 per person per meal, and more than 90 percent of benefits are spent after only three weeks.

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 support SNAP in the following ways:

- protect SNAP from harmful policy proposals to alter its structure or cut its funding;
- strengthen SNAP by basing benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan; and
- provide sufficient reserve funds and authority for USDA to continue SNAP benefits in the event of a disruption.

Child Nutrition Appropriations

The Child Nutrition Programs play a critical role in helping children from low-income families access high-quality nutrition and educational and enrichment activities while their parents are at work, which helps improve the child’s overall health, development, and school achievement.

In addition to maintaining current eligibility structures and adequate funding, Congress should support the Child Nutrition Programs.

- **School Meals** — Provide \$10 million for school meals direct certification grants to reduce paperwork for schools, and \$35 million in school equipment grants to enable school districts to build their capacity to prepare healthier and more cost-effective meals on site. Congress also should preserve the improvements made in the school meals nutrition standards and the overall school nutrition environment.
- **Summer Meals** — Provide \$50 million to continue the current and expanded Summer Electronic Benefit 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 the Child Nutrition Programs. These funds assist schools, child

care centers and homes, and community-based sponsoring organizations to successfully implement the healthier meal patterns.

- **Child Care Meals** — Continue to provide \$10 million for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (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 that bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** — Fund WIC at \$6 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-asides for WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (\$90 million), infrastructure and technical assistance (\$14 million), and management information systems (\$25 million).
- **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)** — Support the WIC FMNP at \$18.5 million. FMNP provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.
- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)** — Provide \$1.35 billion for the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

Senior Nutrition Programs

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** — Provide \$265 million for CSFP. CSFP is currently funded at \$245 million and will provide nutritious food boxes to about 736,000 low-income older adults each month. Additional funding is needed to meet the needs of approximately 20,000 older adults that states cannot serve under the current appropriation.
- **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.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- **TEFAP Commodities** — Provide \$325 million for TEFAP food purchases as authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill to ensure food banks and emergency food providers are able to better meet the needs of their communities.

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 Funds** — Appropriate the fully authorized amount of \$100 million for TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds. TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds help cover costs associated with distributing TEFAP commodities to emergency food providers, and help defray the costs of storing, transporting, and distributing TEFAP foods. Currently appropriated funds in fiscal year 2020 only covered approximately 36 percent of the costs of handling TEFAP commodities.

Puerto Rico Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)

Provide \$210 million in disaster assistance for low-income Puerto Ricans who are struggling to recover from repeated natural disasters. Congress should continue to support Puerto Rico's transition from NAP (a block grant) to SNAP. (For example, in fiscal year 2020, Congress appropriated \$6 million towards the development of a workplan for a transition from NAP to SNAP.)

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Provide \$153 million for food purchases and administrative support for FDPIR. Allocate an additional \$5 million (authorized funding) for self-demonstration projects for tribal organizations to procure foods for FDPIR packages, \$5 million for FDPIR traditional foods market development, and \$15 million for equipment and infrastructure to support food delivery.

Congressional Hunger Center

- **Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program** — Fund the Fellowship Program at its authorized level of \$2 million. Since 1994, Congress has funded the Bill Emerson/Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowships, and by doing so, has enhanced the effectiveness of local, state, and national anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts, and the work of nonprofits, government agencies, and faith-based organizations by the research, analysis, and policy work conducted by the Fellows.