

The Hot Foods Act (H.R. 3519/S. 2258), championed by Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), would allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to be used at grocery retailers to purchase hot foods products that are ready for immediate consumption.

Current SNAP rules prohibit the use of SNAP benefits to purchase hot food from food retailers, except when a state is issuing Disaster SNAP.¹ This rule has been in place since the 1970s, and much like foods available from grocers have changed since then, so have the food needs of households across the country.

Restriction on Hot Foods Worsens Inequities

These outdated rules create unnecessary barriers to supporting SNAP households in achieving food security and better health and well-being. This is especially true for SNAP participants who are older adults, living with a disability, or experiencing homelessness and experiencing specific challenges cooking meals from scratch. A 2021 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report on *Barriers that Constrain the Adequacy of SNAP Allotments* notes physical disability (15 percent), lack of storage space (14 percent), and lack of kitchen equipment (11 percent), as barriers to making healthy meals from scratch.² Addressing these barriers improves SNAP participants' access to food and alleviates the stress associated with preparing meals without the proper resources and support needed.

Additionally, the hot prepared foods ban reinforces the challenges of "time poverty" that households with low incomes face, especially parents working multiple jobs.



The same USDA report shows that 30 percent of SNAP participants note lack of time as a barrier.

The Hot Foods Act is necessary to ensure equitable and convenient food access for SNAP participants, including access to ready-made meals and food products that improve SNAP participants' food security and equity within the program.

What Can You Do

Join the Food Research & Action Center in urging Congress and the Biden administration to enact the Hot Foods Act (H.R. 3519/S. 2258). Furthermore, ask additional Members of Congress to add their names to the list of bill sponsors. Visit [FRAC's Hot Foods Act webpage](#) to see the current cosponsors list, and which Members in your state have yet to sign on.

¹ During natural disasters, states can request a federal waiver for Disaster SNAP recipients (D-SNAP) to allow the purchase of hot and prepared foods from authorized retailers using their D-SNAP benefits

² <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/barriers-constrain-adequacy-snap-allotments>