

# Legislative Priorities to Protect the **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

**SNAP is a federal commitment to prevent hunger among Americans with low incomes, and in doing so, safeguards the nation's health and strengthens its agricultural economy.** By boosting food-purchasing power through normal channels of commerce, SNAP reduces hunger, improves health (from birth outcomes to chronic disease management), lowers health care costs, and stabilizes Americans facing trade-offs with rent, medicine, and utility costs. It is especially vital for older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and families with children — and it drives local economic activity for farmers and retailers. SNAP is America's first line of defense against hunger and a proven public health and economic stabilizer.

## CONGRESS MUST PASS LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN SNAP

### RESTORE SNAP: REVERSE THE DEEPEST CUTS IN PROGRAM HISTORY

The budget reconciliation law (H.R. 1) cuts \$187 billion from SNAP — the largest reduction ever enacted. These cuts shift unprecedented costs to states, expand punitive eligibility time limits, and eliminate protections for veterans, older adults, families, and humanitarian-based noncitizens.

#### SNAP Structural Changes in the States

Starting in FY 2027, states must cover 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs, up from 50 percent today. By FY 2028, states will also, for the first time, begin paying for SNAP benefits, tied to their payment error rates. This upends SNAP's long-standing structure — state and federal partnership — and leaves states exposed to volatile new costs.

Congress should use every opportunity to reverse the harm to SNAP in H.R. 1. This includes:

- ▶ **Restoring Food Security for American Families and Farmers Act (H.R. 6088/S. 3281)**, introduced by Reps. Jahana Hayes (D-CT) and Angie Craig (D-MN) and Sens. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), which would reverse these provisions and reestablish SNAP as a fully federally funded, countercyclical support that protects families during economic downturns.

### END TIME LIMITS

Enacted in 1996, the Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) SNAP time limit restricts many adults without dependents to just three months of benefits over three years unless they document sufficient work hours. This policy cuts off food assistance for people who need it and worsens racial inequities. Evidence shows the time limit does not increase employment and instead sharply reduces SNAP participation, despite SNAP's proven role in improving economic stability. Those affected include veterans, youth aging out of foster care, people reentering the workforce after incarceration, and grandparents caring for children. Access to food shouldn't have time limits.

#### ▶ **Improving Access to Nutrition Act (H.R. 7522/S. 1628):**

This bill, introduced by Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) and Sen. Peter Welch (D-VT), would end SNAP's arbitrary three-month time limit to ensure that all eligible people have access to nutrition assistance and stay healthy.

- ▶ **SNAP Back Act (H.R. 5718):** H.R. 1 expanded SNAP time limits to older adults up to age 64 and stripped longstanding protections for veterans, foster youth, unsheltered people, and parents of children aged 14 and older. This bill, introduced by Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI), would reinstate exemptions to SNAP ABAWD time limits for veterans, former foster youth, and people experiencing homelessness. An additional bill, soon to be introduced by Rep. Shontel Brown (D-OH), would repeal the time limits for older adults and parents with children aged 14 to 18 as well.

### DIRECT HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY REPORT BE REINSTATED

Since 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service's (USDA-ERS) Household Food Security report has served as the nation's benchmark for measuring food security and holding policymakers accountable. The data guide effective SNAP and nutrition policy; in 2024, it showed 47.9 million people — including 14.1 million children — faced food insecurity, or one in seven households. USDA-ERS announced in September 2025 that its final report, issued in December 2025, would be the last. The end of this data collection will obscure the real impacts of policies like H.R. 1 and make the struggle that families face to put food on the table invisible. Annual, reliable data are essential for transparency and informed policymaking.

- ▶ **The Food Assurance and Security Act (H.R.6252):** This bill, introduced by Reps. Wesley Bell (D-MO) and Nanette Diaz Barragan (D-CA), would require the USDA and the Census Bureau to restore food security data collection, analysis, and reporting.

**MAKE SNAP BENEFITS ADEQUATE**

SNAP benefits are falling short of today's food and living costs, forcing families, older adults, and people with disabilities to make impossible tradeoffs among food, housing, and health care.

▶ **The Closing the Meal Gap Act (H.R. 5129/S. 2792):** This bill, introduced by Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), modernizes SNAP to better reflect real-world needs and strengthen food security. SNAP benefit adequacy will be improved by:

- » **Base benefits on a realistic food budget.**
- » **Ease the food or rent dilemma.**
- » **Ease the food or medicine dilemma.**

**SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

An estimated 23 percent of higher education students — about 3.8 million — experience food insecurity, yet fewer than two in five met SNAP's restrictive student eligibility rules, and most eligible students did not receive benefits.

▶ **The Enhance Access to SNAP (EATS) Act (H.R. 4797/S. 2512),** introduced by Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-CA) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), would remove outdated barriers that block many college students with low incomes from accessing SNAP. Current rules deny eligibility to most students enrolled at least half time unless they work 20 hours per week or participate in work study. The EATS Act would eliminate this requirement while maintaining standard income and eligibility criteria, putting students on equal footing with other SNAP applicants. This long overdue, permanent change would reduce food insecurity and support student health, academic success, and long-term economic stability.

**PROTECT SNAP CHOICE AND STRENGTHEN ACCESS**

Efforts to restrict what foods SNAP participants can purchase are costly, ineffective, and harmful. SNAP participants' diets closely mirror those of other low-income households, and food restrictions ignore the real drivers of poor nutrition: inadequate income, food affordability, and limited access to retailers. States should be focused on administering SNAP effectively under the new mandates in H.R. 1 — such as reducing error rates — rather than diverting limited resources to policies that do not work.

▶ **The Hot Foods Act (H.R. 2512/S. 1202):** Introduced by Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), this bill would end the prohibition on using SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods from retailers.

**PROTECT PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND SNAP PARTICIPANTS FROM SKIMMING**

To safeguard SNAP benefits and taxpayer dollars, Congress must strengthen Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) security and protect victims of benefit theft.

▶ **The Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act (H.R. 7658/S. 3949),** introduced by Reps. Dan Goldman (D-NY) and Michael Lawler (R-NY) and Sens. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), and John Fetterman (D-PA), would improve EBT card security by establishing a timeline for states to transition to chip enabled cards and reimbursing states for part of the transition costs, ensuring SNAP protections keep pace with private sector standards.

▶ **The Fairness for Victims of Skimming Act (H.R. 3117/S. 1540),** introduced by Reps. Grace Meng (D-NY) and Michael Lawler (R-NY) and Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA), would permanently extend benefit replacement and guarantee full replacement of stolen SNAP benefits, protecting households from losses caused by theft beyond their control.

**PROTECT ACCESS AND ENSURE PARITY FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

Congress must strengthen SNAP access for communities historically excluded or underserved by the program.

▶ **The Lift the Bar Act,** soon to be introduced, would eliminate the five-year waiting period for lawful permanent immigrants to access SNAP and other federal programs and reverse H.R. 1 provisions that deny food assistance to humanitarian based immigrants, including children, asylees, refugees, and survivors of trafficking.

▶ **The RESTORE Act (H.R. 5223),** introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) and soon to be introduced by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), would repeal the lifetime federal ban on SNAP eligibility for people with felony drug convictions, removing a barrier to food security and successful reentry.

▶ **The Puerto Rico Nutrition Assistance Fairness Act (H.R. 5168/S. 3958),** introduced by Resident Commissioner Pablo José Hernández (D-PR-At Large) and Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Charles Schumer (D-NY), and John Fetterman (D-PA), would create a pathway for Puerto Rico to access SNAP, replacing the inadequate block grant systems that leave residents without reliable, responsive nutrition support.

# PROTECTING SNAP IS PROTECTING AMERICA'S HEALTH, ECONOMY, AND FUTURE