



Fiscal Year 2020 Budget and Appropriations Priorities

February 2019

Federal nutrition programs are a critical safety net for millions of struggling households — including individuals of all ages — 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 performance. These negative impacts can be minimized with robust funding and support for federal nutrition programs.

More than 40 million Americans are living in households that are food insecure. Even as the economy has improved, millions of families have been left behind, and the need for food assistance remains high. Congress should deepen its historically bipartisan commitment to programs that provide food assistance to vulnerable low-income households by protecting the structure of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the other federal nutrition programs, and by sufficiently funding them to address hunger in America.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (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. In July 2018, SNAP helped put food on the table for nearly 39 million people, 1.9 million fewer people than the prior July.

SNAP benefits are targeted to the most vulnerable: 84 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 \$814, which is just under 61 percent of the federal poverty line. 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 performance at school, and an increase in hospitalizations among low-income adults, due to low blood sugar.

Congress should:

- Protect SNAP from harmful policy proposals to alter its structure or cut its funding, which would undermine its efficacy.
- Strengthen SNAP by basing SNAP benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan.

Child Nutrition Appropriations

The Child Nutrition Programs play a critical role in helping children in low-income families achieve access to quality nutrition, child care, and education and enrichment activities, while improving their overall health, development, and school achievement.

First and foremost, Congress should maintain current funding amounts and eligibility structures in the following programs in order to provide the necessary nutritional support to the vulnerable populations that these programs target. In addition to the core funding needed, Congress should:

- **school meals** — Preserve the improvements made in the school meals nutrition standards and the overall school nutrition environment. Congress should 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.
- **summer meals** — Provide \$50 million to continue the current and expanded Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer 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, which is the primary resource for promoting healthy eating and nutrition education in Child Nutrition Programs. These funds assist schools, child care centers and homes, and community-based sponsoring organizations to implement successfully the new, 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 will be crucial to supporting the USDA's important role in providing materials, training and support to state agencies and program operators to bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** — Fund WIC at \$6.15 billion to serve anticipated caseloads and increase significantly the contingency fund to address shortfalls, due to a lapse in appropriations or other unanticipated increases in food costs or caseloads. Congress should carefully monitor WIC participation and food cost inflation to ensure that the approved appropriation responds to economic conditions and meets anticipated needs. Included in the WIC appropriation should be set-asides that include WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (\$90 million), infrastructure and technical assistance (\$14 million), and program research and evaluations (\$25 million).
- **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)** — Support the WIC FMNP at \$18.5 million. FMNP provides fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants, and expands sales at farmers' markets.
- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)** — Provide \$1.32 billion for the program, which is the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

Senior Nutrition Programs

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** — In 2019, CSFP will provide nutritious food boxes to about 630,000 seniors each month. Congress should provide an increase beyond the current \$236 million in funding for CSFP. Additional funding is needed to meet the needs of seniors struggling against hunger in states with USDA-approved plans.
- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (SFMNP)** — SFMNP provides low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs. Congress should support SFMNP at \$21 million.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- **TEFAP commodities** — TEFAP foods are essential resources 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. Congress should provide \$318 million in FY 2020 for TEFAP food purchases as authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill to ensure that food banks and emergency food providers have adequate funding for TEFAP foods.
- **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. Current FY 2019 funding of \$94.4 million covers less than half the cost of handling TEFAP commodities. Congress should appropriate the fully authorized amount of \$100 million for TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

- **FDPIR** provides USDA food to low-income households living on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Congress should provide \$153 million for administration and food purchase funding consistent with prior fiscal years, as well as the fully authorized amount of \$5 million for demonstration projects for tribal organizations to enter into self-determination contracts to procure foods for FDPIR packages, and \$5 million for the FDPIR traditional foods market development.

Congressional Hunger Center

- **Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program** — Since 1994, Congress has funded the Bill Emerson/ Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowships. These fellows provide policy research and analysis to enhance the effectiveness of anti-hunger efforts and anti-poverty efforts at all levels of government through their work with groups, government agencies, and faith-based organizations. Congress should fully fund the Fellowship Program at \$2 million.