



Protecting SNAP: Our Most Essential Tool to Prevent Hunger

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has served for decades as our nation's most essential tool to prevent hunger, and it is central to the struggle to lift people out of poverty. But even with SNAP in place since 1964, **47 million people in the U.S. still face food insecurity, including 9.4 million children.**

Grounded in Gospel values, we believe all people have inherent dignity and the right to basic life essentials—and food is the most basic of all. People of faith and all people of goodwill agree that no individual, child, or family should go hungry, and especially not in the richest nation in the world.

As many Republican Members of Congress have prioritized cutting SNAP in Budget Reconciliation, NETWORK is committed to its protection. Congress must hold the line against any cuts to SNAP, more punishing work-reporting requirements, or calls for “reform” or “restructuring” that are, in fact, veiled efforts to cut needed food support for our communities.

Important facts about SNAP:

SNAP benefits only go to those with the greatest need. 92% of SNAP benefits go to households with incomes at or below the poverty line, and 86% of benefits go to households with children, elderly persons, or persons with disabilities. **Of the 13% of people in the U.S. who receive SNAP, one in five are children.**

SNAP provides just enough funding for a subsistence diet. The average SNAP benefit is just \$6.20 per day per recipient. Meanwhile, food cost inflation continues to climb.

SNAP supports farmers and rural economies. Rural residents are the greatest beneficiaries of SNAP, with more recipients living in rural areas (15.6%) and small towns (15.3%) than in urban areas (12.6%). And, studies clearly show that every \$1 in SNAP creates more than \$1.50 in economic activity. During economic downturns, SNAP benefits help to stabilize rural economic security.

SNAP improves the health, education, and economic self-sufficiency of recipients and reduces other government costs. Research shows that compared to similarly situated non-recipients:

- SNAP beneficiaries have lower rates of many chronic health conditions. As a result, their health care costs are lower by nearly \$1,500 per year due to lower hospitalization rates and costs per hospitalization and fewer emergency room visits.
- Children with SNAP have lower risks of developmental issues and abuse and neglect, and better educational achievement and health outcomes.
- Having had SNAP as a child increases an adult woman's educational levels, earnings, and housing security, and reduces the need for public assistance.



SNAP has strict eligibility rules, including work-reporting requirements, and is means-tested.

“Able-bodied adults without children” under age 55 can only get SNAP for three months while unemployed unless they meet narrow exceptions. Some states allow limited waivers, e.g., in high-unemployment areas, but many states do not. SNAP benefits are strictly means-tested, with benefits dependent on a household’s income or assets.

Nonetheless, some legislators threaten SNAP with cruel, counterproductive cuts and measures, including:

- **Cutting the bipartisan “Thrifty Food Plan”** that has been the core formula for basic, nutritious food allowances for many years.
- **Curtailing states’ flexibility to respond to hardships** such as increased unemployment or family health and childcare crises.
- **Implementing so-called structural “reforms”** like discretionary block grants and state cost sharing. In reality, these “reforms” will cut federal SNAP support and shift the burden of preventing hunger to the states—with no guarantee that even reduced benefits will be used for basic food assistance to those who need it most.
- **Punishing low-income workers and their families** by rescinding policies that allow them to retain their SNAP eligibility if they modestly increase their income.
- **Doubling down on work-reporting requirements that are simply more red tape and barriers to accessing food.** Work-reporting requirements were already increased last year, and even harsher requirements will only punish people and their families, including:
 - A grandmother who cares for her grandkids so that their mother can hold a full-time job;
 - Individuals with severe health conditions who are struggling with endless delays in their disability applications; and
 - Gig workers with unstable, temporary employment opportunities.

Cutting SNAP will have devastating consequences. Hunger is a moral issue that is a basic concern for all faith communities. Post-pandemic cuts to SNAP have already hurt our families and neighbors. Those cuts, combined with ever-increasing food cost inflation, have overwhelmed local soup kitchens and food banks; further cuts will push them to a breaking point. **Any additional cuts to SNAP will increase poverty nationwide and increase federal and local government costs for health care, education, and social services support.**

NETWORK urges you to resist any new, devastating cuts to SNAP or additional work-reporting requirements.

SNAP keeps food on the table and strengthens our economy.

Don’t be the vote that takes food from our families.