

# Impact of SNAP Changes in H.R. 1 for Children and Families

## (February 2026)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is our country's largest anti-hunger program, serving over 40 million Americans each year. It not only keeps people fed but also combats poverty, stimulates local economies, and supports children's future success. SNAP is a federal program but administered by state and local governments, who have some flexibility in determining benefit levels, income and asset limits, and other aspects of the program.

H.R. 1 (known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) was passed in July 2025 and made significant changes to SNAP and Medicaid. Changes to Medicaid are covered in a separate document.

These SNAP changes will likely make it harder for many families with children to access food assistance. They may also have a ripple effect on limiting children's access to free school meals. Some states and counties may act to mitigate the harm of these federal changes by using state funds to protect access for low-income households. However, almost all state governments are required to balance their budgets, and this additional state spending on SNAP could come at the expense of other programs that serve children and families. In addition, [children and families granted refugee, asylum, or certain other immigration statuses](#) will no longer be eligible for SNAP assistance funded by the federal government, but states can still provide state-funded nutrition assistance for these populations.

At a time when we know that family homelessness and housing instability are growing in many communities due to the high cost of food, rent, and other necessities, these federal SNAP cuts are short-sighted and likely to make it harder for Family Promise to address the unmet needs of children and families in the communities where we operate.

## Key SNAP Stats and Talking Points

- [More than 12 million children](#) in the U.S. rely on SNAP.
- [Children account for nearly 40% of SNAP recipients](#), and more than 60% of SNAP recipients are in families with children.
- Homelessness and hunger are inextricably linked. By helping with the cost of food, SNAP frees up income for rent and utilities. [29% of renter households in the United States that are housing cost burdened](#) (meaning they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs) are enrolled in SNAP.
- SNAP reduces hunger and food insecurity by 20-30%. (Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to food, particularly nutritious food. Very low food insecurity results in hunger and reduced food intake.)

- SNAP [prevented 1.4 million children](#) from experiencing poverty in 2024.
- SNAP [improves children's health](#), for it is linked to better nutrition for children and lower risks of developmental delays and hospitalizations.
- SNAP improves [children's educational outcomes](#). Children cannot learn if they are hungry, and researchers have documented that children's test scores are lower toward the end of the SNAP benefit month, when food is most likely to be running out at home.
- SNAP has long-term benefits for children. SNAP access during early childhood leads to [improved health in adulthood, and for women, it supports economic mobility](#) through increased educational attainment and earnings in adulthood.
- A family's loss of SNAP could also cause children to lose access to free school meals. Children who receive SNAP are automatically eligible for school meals, including during the summer. The loss of this automatic eligibility [could cause nearly 100,000 children per month](#) to become disenrolled from free school meals. More information on the link between SNAP and school meals [can be found here](#).
- SNAP has an [important economic impact for communities](#) — every additional \$1 in SNAP benefits generates at least \$1.50 in economic activity. SNAP recipients spend their benefits quickly, generating significant income for the agricultural industry and grocery retailers, supporting jobs in these sectors.

## Changes to the SNAP program in H.R. 1

### Expanded SNAP work requirements

*Note that states are implementing these expanded work requirements on different timelines, but they are already in effect in many states. [How to Access SNAP Information in Your State](#).*

To receive SNAP for more than 3 of 36 consecutive months, some SNAP recipients are subject to requirements that mandate they must either work, volunteer, or participate in an approved work or training program for at least 80 hours each month. SNAP recipients can do a combination of these activities to achieve their required hours. H.R. 1 expanded the groups of individuals now subject to these work requirements.

- Parents and caretakers with children ages 14 and older are now subject to work requirements.
- Adults 55-64 must now meet the work requirement (Therefore, now all adults 18-64 must meet the requirement unless they have a child younger than 14 or meet another exemption.)

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are no longer automatically exempt.
- Former foster youth aged 18-24 are no longer automatically exempt from work requirements.
- Veterans are no longer automatically exempt.
- Students enrolled in higher education for at least half the month have special eligibility requirements for SNAP and may be required to work at least 20 hours a week to qualify unless they meet a separate exemption.

## Exemptions to Work Requirements

- States can apply for waivers to exempt SNAP recipients from work requirements in a certain region if the unemployment rate of 10% or more. [Alaska and Hawai'i](#) are allowed to waive in areas where unemployment is 1.5 times the national average. In addition, Alaska and Hawai'i have a temporary waiver authority to exempt individuals from the work requirement if the Secretary determines the state is making a "good faith effort" on implementation.
  - Previously, waivers could be obtained for a region if states identified a lack of sufficient jobs but did not have to meet a certain unemployment rate.
- Parents of children ages 13 and younger are exempt.
- Individuals who are pregnant are exempt.
- Individuals who have a documented physical or mental disability can receive an exemption. The disability must be verified by a licensed provider, or the individual must receive or be applying for a disability benefit.
- Adults who are primary caregivers for dependent children or parents with a disability are exempt from work requirements.
- Individuals who regularly participate in a program to treat addiction are exempt.
- Individuals who are applying for or receiving unemployment benefits are exempt.
- [Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and other individuals who are part of a Tribal or Indigenous community](#) may be exempt.

# Research Shows that Work Requirements Do Not Support Family Economic Mobility



In 2024, [at least one parent was employed in over 90% of families with children](#). Attaching work requirements to public benefits has not been found to lead to higher-paying employment and, in fact, [often hinders rather than fosters economic mobility](#), causing working families to lose [assistance due to missed paperwork and other administrative burdens](#). A [2019 nonpartisan study from the National Academy of Sciences](#) found that “work requirements are at least as likely to increase as to decrease poverty.” Documenting steady work is especially difficult for low-wage workers whose hours may vary week-to-week and often have no control over their schedules.

It is important to note that while work requirements are directed at adults, they also negatively impact children in the household. Even if children’s SNAP benefits are not affected, these requirements could reduce a household’s overall SNAP benefits, leading to less money for groceries when prices are high, and ultimately diminishing the amount of food the household has to share with children. Children often depend on pooled resources (including SNAP benefits) from extended family members who do not claim them as dependents, such as a grandparent who watches children after school or a non-custodial parent. Youth aging out of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth over the age of 18 are subject to these work requirements, even though they already face unique barriers to economic stability and accessing public assistance programs.

## **Increased Costs to States to Operate SNAP**

Currently, the federal government covers half of the costs of administering SNAP. Starting October 1, 2026, states will have to pay a larger percentage of SNAP administrative costs (from 50 to 75%). In [ten states, county governments are responsible for administering SNAP](#), and in 3 of these states (North Carolina, New Jersey, and New York), county governments will be fully responsible for covering this increased percentage of administrative costs. Administrative costs of SNAP vary widely from state to state, but on average, state and/or county governments will have to pay an [additional \\$67 million per year](#).

In addition, starting October 1, 2027, some states will now be responsible for some of the direct benefit costs of SNAP. Before the passage of H.R. 1, the federal government covered 100% of the cost of SNAP benefits. The timing and amount of this cost shift for benefits will differ by state based on the state's SNAP error rate, but in some states, [SNAP budgets will more than double due to these changes](#). Error rates, [which measure improper payments or incorrect amounts in benefits for a household](#), are often due to mistakes from outdated technology or a lack of trained administrative staff. Data on error rates from 2026 or 2027 will be used to calculate the cost shifts that start in late 2027. Given that it may take state governments several years and significant funds to substantially reduce error rates, they will be incentivized to lower error rates in other ways, such as reducing enrollment and narrowing eligibility.

States are not required to participate in SNAP. Given the combination of these increased administrative and direct benefit costs, there is concern that some states could decide it is not financially worthwhile to continue participating in the program and cease SNAP benefits.

## **SNAP State Resources**

- [How to Find a Food Stamp Office Near You](#) — **Propel**
- [SNAP: State by State Data, Fact Sheets, and Resources](#) — **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**
- [SNAP Income Levels by State \(2026\)](#) — **Propel**
- [SNAP Changes Will Upend State Budgets](#) — **Georgetown Law's Center on Poverty and Inequality**
- [A City Playbook for Preparing for the Impacts of H.R. 1/OBBBA on Food Security and Local Economies](#) — **Food and Research Action Center**

# Weigh-In with Your Lawmakers

These SNAP changes are not inevitable. Congress can still act to stop them or lessen their severity. State and local officials also play a big role, for they can take steps to reduce SNAP error rates, fill the gap caused by federal cuts by supplementing state and local funds, and ensure that the loss of SNAP access [doesn't also mean the loss of access to free school meals](#).

Below is sample template language you can use to urge your lawmakers to take action to protect access to SNAP for children and families. Providing specific data on the impact for your state, county, or community is super helpful, as are individual stories. Don't hesitate to reach out to Cara Baldari at [cbaldari@familypromise.org](mailto:cbaldari@familypromise.org) for help in drafting or sending out a note.

Dear **XX**,

*I am writing to you from Family Promise of **XX**, an organization working to prevent and end family homelessness in **XX**, to ask you to act to protect access to SNAP for children and families in our community.*

*Nationwide, more than 60% of SNAP recipients are families with children. At Family Promise, we see firsthand that SNAP benefits are critical in helping families stabilize when they experience homelessness or other hardships. Parents can keep food on the table as they work to obtain stable housing and achieve economic mobility. Keeping children fed supports their healthy development and future success. It is also good for our communities— every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates at least \$1.50 in economic activity.*

**Share specific data on SNAP enrollment, economic benefits, or other information on the importance of SNAP to your community.**

*We remain concerned that federal changes included in H.R. 1, enacted into law on July 4, 2025, will reduce access to SNAP in **XX** for children and families through lower enrollment and narrower eligibility. Family Promise is already struggling to meet the unmet needs of families experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the region we serve, and we know that limiting access to nutrition assistance will only compound the problem.*

**Share any specific data or information on the negative implications of cuts to SNAP to your community.**

*The changes included in H.R. 1 are not inevitable. We ask that you do everything in your power to stop or mitigate harm to our community that will result if more children and families experience hunger. This includes supporting an increase in state or local funding to supplement any gaps in federal funding and ensuring that supplemental funding doesn't come at the expense of other critical funding or programs for children. This also includes ensuring that a family's loss of SNAP benefits does not lead to a child losing access to the school meals program.*

*Helping families keep food on the table results in a healthier and brighter future for not only the children in our community but also society as a whole. Thank you for considering our request to prioritize SNAP access, and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or additional information.*

Sincerely,

**XX**