



## Congress Must Protect and Strengthen SNAP and Other Key Anti-Hunger Programs

March 2020

### Federal Nutrition Programs Provide Vital Help to Millions of People

In 2018, Congress passed the 2018 Farm Bill and reaffirmed the commitment to protecting access and funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. The legislation also invested in several other critically important federal nutrition programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). We call upon Congress to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure that implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill is timely and protects the intent of the law.

### SNAP

SNAP currently helps 36.4 million low-income participants each month put food on the table. When the number of families struggling to make ends meet increases, SNAP responds quickly and effectively to meet that need.

### SNAP Action Needed

Congress should protect SNAP from harmful policy proposals that alter its structure or cut its funding, which would undermine the program's efficacy. Congress should strengthen SNAP by adopting provisions contained in the following bills:

#### H.R. 1368 (Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2019)

- Base SNAP benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan.
- Boost SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter.

- Boost SNAP benefits for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine.
- Boost the SNAP minimum monthly benefit to \$25 per month.

#### H.R. 2809 (Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2019)

- Lift SNAP's arbitrary three-month time limit to ensure that all eligible people have access to nutrition assistance and stay healthy while seeking full-time work.

#### H.R. 4297 (Enhance Access To SNAP Act of 2019)

- Level SNAP access for low-income college students.

### SNAP Strengths

For more than four decades, SNAP has enjoyed strong bipartisan support. SNAP relieves pressure on overwhelmed food banks, pantries, religious congregations, and other emergency food providers across the country that could not begin to meet the need for food assistance if SNAP eligibility or benefits were reduced. For every meal provided through the Feeding America network of food banks, SNAP provides nine.

Despite SNAP's many strengths, benefit amounts are too low. SNAP benefits average less than \$1.40 per person per meal, and 90 percent of benefits are spent after only three weeks. Recipients struggle to afford an adequate and nutritious diet on a consistent basis.

Improving SNAP benefit adequacy would help millions of older Americans, people with disabilities, children, struggling parents, low-income college students, unemployed and underemployed people, and veterans. It would bolster SNAP's positive impacts by promoting food security, better health and educational outcomes, workforce productivity, and community economic vitality. Each dollar in federally funded SNAP benefits during a recession generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity.

### **SNAP DELIVERS ASSISTANCE**

quickly and effectively to people recovering from natural disasters or economic crises.



### **SNAP REACHES KEY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

— the large majority are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

**SNAP IS EFFICIENT,** using electronic benefits technology and regular channels of commerce.



**SNAP SUPPORTS WORK,** helping families struggling with low wages.

### **SNAP REDUCES HUNGER**

and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.



### **SNAP IMPROVES DIETARY INTAKE**

and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.

### **SNAP BOLSTERS LOCAL ECONOMIES**

by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.



**SNAP LIFTS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE** out of poverty.

## **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP is a means-tested federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to individuals and families in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations such as food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. Nutritious TEFAP food commodities are an essential resource for food banks. As the demand for food remains high at food banks across the country, a reliable and steady stream of emergency food is needed.

In addition, TEFAP has a strong impact on the farm economy. TEFAP purchases give commodity producers an average of 27 cents per dollar. That rises to 85 cents on the dollar for bonus commodity purchases that are made when agricultural markets need support, according to USDA's Economic Research Service. By contrast, only about 16 cents of every retail food dollar go back to the farmer. Congress should support strong funding for Section 32 so USDA can purchase excess commodities for distribution to our nation's food banks.

### **TEFAP Action Needed**

Congress should provide \$100 million for TEFAP Storage and Distribution in the fiscal year 2021 Agriculture Appropriations bill, and fund TEFAP entitlement food purchases at the level authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill.

## **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**

CSFP's nutritious monthly food packages play an important role in addressing the nutritional needs and combatting the poor health conditions often found among low-income seniors who are experiencing food insecurity. In 2020, CSFP will provide food packages to 736,000 low-income seniors throughout all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

### **CSFP Action Needed**

Congress should provide the necessary funding to meet the current caseload, including the needs of states with seniors on their waitlists. Congress should also ensure USDA's strong implementation of important CSFP certification changes are enacted by the 2018 Farm Bill.