



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

February 2019

### The Strength of SNAP:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. SNAP currently helps to put food on the table for more than 38 million low-income participants each month. When the number of families struggling to make ends meet increases, SNAP responds quickly and effectively to meet that need.

For more than four decades, SNAP has enjoyed strong bipartisan support and has helped ensure that vulnerable low-income people in our nation can put food on the table. 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.

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

#### SNAP Action Needed

Congress should protect SNAP from harmful policy proposals that alter its structure or cut its funding, which would undermine its efficacy. Instead, Congress should strengthen SNAP by adopting provisions contained in the "Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2019" sponsored by Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) to increase SNAP benefits for families and individuals.

Improving SNAP benefit adequacy would help many millions of older Americans, people with disabilities, children, struggling parents, 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 generates \$1.79 in economic activity.

### 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 made when agricultural markets need support, according to USDA's Economic Research Service. Congress should support USDA funding and purchase of excess commodities for distribution to our nation's food banks.

#### TEFAP Action Needed

Congress should fund TEFAP Storage and Distribution at \$100 million per year in FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriation legislation and TEFAP entitlement food purchases at \$318 million per year as authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill.

### Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):

CSFP provides nutritious food boxes to about 630,000 low-income seniors each month. All states and the District of Columbia are scheduled to participate in CSFP in 2019. CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity and are at risk for hunger. CSFP food packages play an important role in addressing the nutritional needs of low-income seniors.

#### CSFP Action Needed

Congress should provide additional funding to expand access to CSFP in states with USDA-approved plans. Congress should also ensure strong USDA implementation of important CSFP certification changes enacted by the 2018 Farm Bill.



## Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Congress has an important opportunity in 2019 to improve the health of millions of our nation's children by passing a strong reauthorization that protects and strengthens the child nutrition programs. These successful, cost-effective federal nutrition programs play a critical role in helping children in low-income families achieve access to child care, educational, and enrichment activities while improving overall nutrition, health, development, and academic achievement.

Congress must enact a child nutrition reauthorization bill that strengthens program access and supports participation by underserved children; ensures nutrition quality; and simplifies program administration and operation. The reauthorization should also maintain the critical gains made in the last reauthorization, including expanding low-income children's access to programs and improvements in the school meals nutrition standards and the overall school nutrition environment.

### Out-of-School Time Programs

The afterschool and summer nutrition programs provide meals and snacks at schools, parks, recreation centers, nonprofit organizations, and other sites in low-income communities or that serve primarily low-income children, often combining meals with enrichment, recreational, and educational activities. Currently, only about 15 percent of children who rely on free or reduced-price school lunch access a summer meal. Increasing access to summer nutrition when children are out of school should be a top priority in the reauthorization. The bill should make investments to increase the reach of and the benefits provided through the summer meal programs; streamline program operations to reduce unnecessary red tape; expand the Summer EBT program; and provide the opportunity to reach children through alternative delivery models in areas with very limited access to summer meals.

### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP provides healthy meals and snacks, supporting good nutrition and high-quality, affordable child care. It helps children to develop fully and enter school ready to learn, and supports parents' ability to work. Unfortunately, under the current system, CACFP meals and snacks are out of reach for millions of young children in child care. The reauthorization bill can expand access to CACFP by improving the area eligibility test, allowing the option of a third meal service (typically a snack or supper), allowing

annual eligibility for proprietary centers, increasing CACFP reimbursements to support the new healthier standards, streamlining program operations and paperwork, creating CACFP direct certification and community eligibility options, enhancing program reimbursements for CACFP sponsors, and continuing funding for USDA's CACFP nutrition and wellness education and program efforts.

### National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program provide nutritious meals to millions of children across the country and play an important role in reducing hunger, improving nutrition, and supporting learning. Still, many eligible children do not participate in the programs, especially school breakfast which serves just over half of the low-income children who participate in school lunch. The reauthorization should protect eligible children's access to school meals by leveraging additional opportunities to directly certify low-income children for free school meals. It should ensure that any changes to the process of verifying eligibility do not cause eligible children to lose school meal benefits and limit any increase in administrative work for schools. Congress also should protect community eligibility which provides an important, efficient, and accurate path to free meals for children in high-poverty schools. The reauthorization also should take steps both to ensure that the school cafeteria is a positive environment for all students, and to reduce the accumulation of unpaid school meal debt.

### The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC provides low-income at-risk pregnant and postpartum mothers, infants, and young children nutritious foods and nutrition education. The bill could increase access to WIC by extending certification periods for infants and postpartum women to two years and enrollment for children until their sixth birthdays; supporting efforts to streamline and modernize WIC services through technology, including achieving the congressional mandate for all states to achieve WIC EBT by 2020; expanding WIC research on underserved communities; and maintaining the scientific integrity of the WIC food package process as USDA undertakes the congressionally mandated 10-year cycle revision.