

2023 Federal Priorities

FIGHT HUNGER IN CALIFORNIA

In our nation of abundance, no one should go hungry. Thanks to timely and effective federal response, hunger in California remained relatively stable during the COVID-19 crisis, despite incredible hardship. But deep inequities remain for low-income communities of color, stemming from long-standing historical and systemic injustices based on racist and xenophobic policies. We call on the California Congressional Delegation to take bold action at the scale urgently necessary to end hunger and systemic poverty facing our communities.

Unprecedented Hunger Cliff Demands Urgent Action to Maximize SNAP's Unparalleled Anti-Hunger & Economic Benefits to California

Last year, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) supported 4.9 million Californians – that's nearly 1 in 8 people. SNAP brought \$14 billion in federal food benefits, \$26 billion in total economic activity, and 346,000 jobs statewide.¹

Unfortunately, SNAP households are currently facing a hunger cliff now that February 2023 was the final month of Emergency Allotments (EAs), a devastating loss of \$500 million a month stateside and on average \$82 per person per month. In addition, college students will face renewed eligibility barriers and California will lose important program flexibilities that have streamlined access. **With the end of Pandemic EBT, the SNAP hunger cliff represents fully one-third of the meals in California's safety net.**

Thankfully, in the 2018 Farm Bill Congress directed the USDA on a bipartisan basis to implement a long overdue update to the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). Even with the TFP update, however, SNAP benefits are still inadequate to maintain a healthy diet; SNAP benefits in California average a paltry \$6.45 per person per day now that the EAs have ended.

The Great Recession offers a sobering reminder of the path Congress must avoid; the premature end of the ARRA SNAP boost caused a decade of elevated hunger and hardship, yet was only an \$11 average monthly benefit loss, far less than the EAs. Congress must continue to act to stop a resurgence in hunger that can be prevented.

Key Legislation to Strengthen SNAP's Power to Fight Hunger & Boost the Economy

We must center the work to end hunger on policies and strategies that most effectively support the groups that face the starkest inequities. Black, Latine, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander American households have faced a long history of structural racism that has contributed to disproportionate rates of food insecurity that must be addressed head-on through equitable policies:

- » **Improving Access to Nutrition Act** (H.R. 1510 Lee 118th)
 - › Repeals SNAP's harsh and counterproductive three-month time limit for out-of-work Americans and improves SNAP access for families working their way up the economic ladder.
- » **Enhance Access To SNAP Act (EATS Act)** (H.R. 3183 Gomez 118th/S. 1488 Gillibrand 118th)
 - › Eliminates the outdated and unfair SNAP restrictions for college students.
- » **Closing the Meal Gap Act** (H.R. 3037 Adams 118th/S. 1336 Gillibrand 118th)
 - › Replaces the Thrifty Food Plan with the more appropriate Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for SNAP allotments;
 - › Eliminates the punitive cap on the SNAP Excess Shelter Deduction; and
 - › Streamlines ways for states to establish a SNAP Standard Excess Medical Deduction for persons who are older adults or have disabilities (with a minimum standard of \$140).
- » **Lift the Bar Act** (H.R. 4170 Jayapal 118th/S. 2038 Hirono 118th)
 - › Broaden the reach of SNAP for lawfully present immigrants by undoing xenophobic restrictions that deny eligibility and have a broader chilling effect on participation.
- » **Hot Foods Act** (H.R. 3519 Meng, Fitzpatrick 118th/S. 2258 Bennet 118th)
 - › Permanently ends the prohibition on purchasing hot and prepared foods in SNAP.
- » **Allowing Steady Savings by Eliminating Tests Act (ASSET Act)** (H.R. 3822 Gomez 117th)
 - › Eliminates asset tests in SNAP and LIHEAP eligibility, and raises SSI asset limits.
- » **Re-Entry Support Through Opportunities for Resources & Essentials (RESTORE Act)** (H.R. 3479 Cohen 118th/S. 1753 Booker 118th)
 - › Repeals the SNAP Drug Felony Ban.
 - › Codifies a USDA administrative waiver to SNAP state agencies that allows individuals to apply for SNAP 30 days prior to their release from incarceration.

California FY 2023 Budget & Appropriations

ANTI-HUNGER PRIORITIES

» **School & Summer Meals:**

- › \$100 million to continue the current and expanded Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Demonstration Projects to ensure that children in rural and underserved areas have access to nutrition during the summer.
- › \$10 million for school meals direct certification grants to reduce paperwork for schools, and \$100 million in school equipment grants to enable school districts to build their capacity to prepare healthier and more cost-efficient meals on site.

» **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) food purchases:** \$900 million to meet record, ongoing community demand and prevent a federal food cliff; \$200 million as authorized in the Farm Bill for TEFAP Storage and Distribution.

» **Commodity Supplemental Food Program:** Maintain the current \$390 million, or as USDA deems necessary to support the national caseload.

» **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants & Children (WIC):** .

- › Fund WIC at \$6.35 billion to serve anticipated caseloads while accounting for the rising costs of delivering high-quality nutrition services. Included in the WIC appropriation should be set-asides for WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (\$90 million), infrastructure and technical assistance (\$14 million), and management information systems (\$75 million).
- › \$30 million for Farmers' Market Nutrition Program which provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.

» **Child Care Meals:** \$10 million for the Child and Adult Care Food Program's (CACFP) nutrition and wellness education and program efforts. These funds are crucial for supporting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) important role in providing materials, training, and support to state agencies and program operators to bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.

» **21st Century Community Learning Centers:** \$2.09 billion for the program, which is the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

» **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations:** \$200 million for administration and food purchase, \$5 million for demonstration projects to enter into self-determination contracts to procure foods, and \$5 million for traditional foods market development, as well as authorization and funding to allow participants to receive both FDIPIR and SNAP at the same time.

» **Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP):** Authorization and funding for Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to transition from NAP to full participation in SNAP (Puerto Rico Nutrition Assistance Fairness Act, [H.R. 253/S. 949](#)). The choice of and path toward transition should be approved by the territories' leadership.

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- » **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program:** \$30 million for FMNP which provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.
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