

## **Memo on SNAP Cuts**

On Wednesday, May 14, the House Committee on Agriculture passed a bill that includes nearly \$300 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Food prices have risen significantly - Northern Illinois Food Bank strongly opposes any cuts to nutrition programs that help our neighbors put food on the table.

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### **State Cost-Sharing Tied to SNAP Error Rates**

Since the SNAP program was created, the federal government has paid 100% of the benefit amounts. The bill proposes a significant shift in responsibility for SNAP funding, requiring states to cover between 5% and 25% of total SNAP benefits based on their payment error rates:

- Under 6% error rate—State pays 5%
- 6–8%—15%
- 8–10%—20%
- 10% or higher—25%

If this policy had been in place in FY2023, Illinois—with a 9.91% error rate—would have been required to pay 20% of benefit costs, totaling an estimated \$888 million. Even the lowest cost-share tier (5%) would cost the state \$222 million annually.

The bill would also eliminate SNAP's existing error tolerance threshold, which currently excludes minor overpayments/underpayments (under \$57 in FY25) from a state's official error rate. Removing this threshold would undoubtedly increase reported error rates, forcing even more cost on states, regardless of overall program integrity.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) already administers an accountability program that has worked in keeping error rates low. States with high error rates in consecutive years have faced a fiscal sanction. States were allowed to invest half of their sanction amount on improvements programs and waived the second half if error rates were successfully reduced.

### **Increased State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs**

Currently, states share 50% of SNAP's administrative costs. The proposed legislation would increase that share to 75%, representing an additional \$83 million annually for Illinois if administrative costs remain consistent with FY2023 levels (\$166 million). This increase

would further strain already overstretched state budgets and could lead to cuts in staffing, outreach, and processing capacity.

### **Expanded Work Requirements and Time Limits for SNAP Eligibility**

The bill also significantly expands time limits for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), currently limited to three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period unless the recipient works or volunteers at least 80 hours per month. Existing exemptions for adults aged 55+ and families with children under 18 would be narrowed:

- Raises ABAWD age limit from 54 to 65
- Applies time limits to families with children aged 7 and older, unless the parents are married and at least one meets work requirements

About 472,000 Illinois residents, roughly 25% of the state's total SNAP caseload, would be at risk of reduced or terminated benefits:

- 75,000 in households with adults aged 55–64 (no children, no disability)
- 397,000 in households with adults aged 18–64 and school-age children (no disability)

Among these, about 229,000 Illinois residents could lose all SNAP benefits:

- 65,000 aged 55–64 (no children, no disability)
- 164,000 aged 18–64 with school-age children (no disability)

### **Freeze on Future Thrifty Food Plan Updates**

The bill would prohibit USDA from updating the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) beyond inflation-based cost-of-living adjustments. The TFP is the cost of groceries needed to provide a nutritious and low-cost diet for a family of 4, and the basis on which SNAP benefits are calculated. In 2021, the USDA reevaluated the TFP to reflect changes in food prices, consumption patterns and modern dietary guidelines, resulting in an increase in the average SNAP benefit by \$1.40 per person per day.

Today, the average SNAP benefit per meal in Illinois is \$2.84, while the average cost of a meal is 17% higher, and in 26 counties, over 20% higher. This policy would deepen the shortfall and make it harder for families to afford nutritious food.

### **Harm to Legally Present Immigrants**

The bill would bar access to SNAP for all legally present “qualified” immigrants who are not lawful permanent residents (LPRs), including: refugees, asylum seekers, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and humanitarian parolees.

These immigrants currently qualify for SNAP under longstanding law (P.L. 104-193). Federal law already imposes a five-year waiting period for many LPRs and parolees, with limited exemptions.

This proposal would primarily impact individuals and families fleeing war, persecution, or humanitarian crises—including an estimated 11,000 legally present refugees in Illinois and a portion of the 52,000 “other non-citizens” receiving SNAP in the state.

### **Utility and Shelter Deductions**

The bill would restrict Illinois’ use of a simplified Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), a federal option that helps households receive accurate SNAP benefits without excessive paperwork. Currently, Illinois allows a higher SUA for households that incur heating or cooling costs or receive fuel assistance.

The proposal would limit this option to households with at least one member who is:

- 60 years or older, or
- Receiving a disability benefit

This change would:

- Increase administrative burden for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- Risk underpayments to eligible families who cannot document specific utility costs
- Lead to benefit cuts for thousands of working families

### **Our Ask:**

1. Donate to our Community Response Fund: [SolveHungerToday.org/response](https://SolveHungerToday.org/response)
2. Contact your Federal representatives and **tell them to vote no on cuts to SNAP and Medicaid:**

#### **Medicaid:**

- Visit the U.S. House of Representatives website (<https://www.house.gov/>) and the U.S. Senate website (<https://www.senate.gov/>). You can enter your zip code to find your representatives.

#### **Methods of Communication:**

- **Phone Calls:** Calling your representative's office is a direct way to voice your opinion. Be prepared with a brief message stating your name, affiliation with Northern Illinois Food Bank (as a board member), and your specific request or concern regarding a particular policy.
  - a. **Tips for Calling:** Be polite and respectful. Clearly state the bill number or issue you are calling about. Share a brief personal story or explain why this issue matters to our community. Ask for the staff member's name and if they can relay your message to the representative.
- **Emails:** Email is a convenient way to communicate your views. Keep your message concise and focused on one issue. Personalize your email by explaining why the issue is important to you and the Food Bank.
  - a. **Tips for Emailing:** Include your name and address so the office knows you are a constituent. Clearly state the subject of your email (e.g., "Cuts to SNAP and Medicaid"). Be specific about your request (e.g., "Please vote NO on cuts to SNAP and Medicaid"). Avoid jargon and be respectful.
- **Letters:** A written letter can have a significant impact. It shows you've taken the time to articulate your thoughts.
- **Meetings:** Requesting a meeting with your elected officials or their staff offers an opportunity for a more in-depth discussion. This can be particularly effective when advocating for complex issues or building relationships.
- **Social Media:** While less direct, engaging with your representatives on social media can raise awareness and show public support or opposition to certain policies.
  - a. **Tips for Social Media:** Be respectful and factual. Tag your representatives in your posts. Use relevant hashtags. Share the Food Bank's social media posts to amplify our message.

## RELEVANT HASHTAGS

#EndHunger

#AdvocacyInAction

#AntiHunger

#SNAPMatters

#ProtectSNAP

#FightHunger