



2025 Advocacy Agenda

Northern Illinois Food Bank is the leader of hunger relief in our 13-county service area and distributed over 90 million meals in FY24. In our advocacy efforts, we work alongside Feeding America, Feeding Illinois and community partners to build strong relationships with our elected officials and member agencies, and to promote policies that strengthen the food programs that ensure everyone in Northern Illinois has the food they need to thrive.

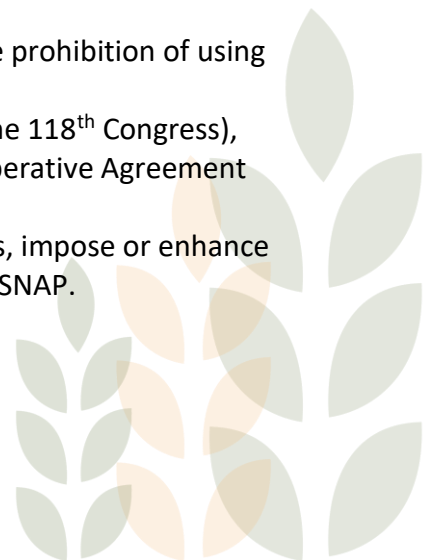
The Food Bank and our member agencies are committed to serving 570,000 neighbors each month, providing essential food and support. We want to reassure everyone that our doors are open to all. No identification is needed to access food at mobile market distributions, My Pantry Express online food pantry, and many of our member food pantries. Our top priority is to ensure everyone has access to food, no matter their circumstances.

Our mission is to provide nutritious food and resources for our neighbors, with dignity, equity and convenience, through partnerships and innovation. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to this mission and our vision, for everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive.

Policy Priorities

Federal

- **Protect SNAP and TEFAP:** Advocate for passing a Farm Bill that does not cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and includes the following marker bills:
 - The Farmers Feeding America Act (H.R. 6203/S. 2713 in the 118th Congress), which would increase funding TEFAP by raising commodity funding to \$500 million per year and authorizing \$200 million per year for storage and distribution.
 - The Military Family Nutrition Assistance Act (H.R. 1763/S. 497 in the 118th Congress), which would give more active duty servicemembers access to SNAP benefits by excluding the Basic Allowance for Housing from being counted as income.
 - The Enhance Access to SNAP (EATS) Act (H.R. 3183/S. 1488 in the 118th Congress), which would make more college students eligible for SNAP by eliminating the work requirement.
 - The Hot Foods Act (H.R. 3519/S. 2258), which would end the prohibition of using SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods.
 - The Expanding Access To (EAT) Local Foods Act (S. 3982 in the 118th Congress), which would make the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) permanent.
 - Push back against efforts to reduce benefits amounts, impose or enhance work requirements, and create barriers to accessing SNAP.



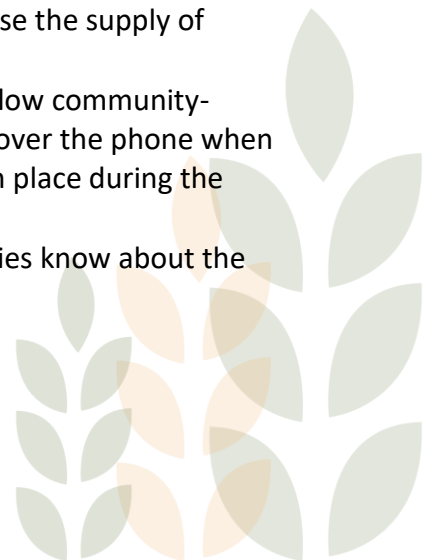


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- **Protect TANF:** Advocate against cuts to funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a program that provides temporary cash assistance to eligible pregnant women and families to help cover basic needs.
- **Protect meal programs for children:** Advocate against efforts to make it harder for schools to qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows high-poverty schools and districts to offer free meals to students.
- **Advocate for improvements in the next Child Nutrition Reauthorization:** Once negotiations begin, advocate for the following marker bills:
 - **WIC:**
 - The MODERN WIC Act (H.R. 2424/S. 984 in the 118th Congress), which would allow for remote certification and benefits issuance.
 - The Wise Investment in Children (WIC) Act (H.R. 3364/S. 1604 in the 118th Congress), which would allow children to remain on WIC until age 6.
 - **School and summer meals:**
 - The School Meals Expansion Act (H.R. 2567 in the 119th Congress), which would increase funding for CEP schools serving free meals to students.
 - The Stop Child Hunger Act (H.R. 4379 in the 118th Congress), which would expand the Summer EBT program to all school closures longer than 5 consecutive days and increase the value to cover breakfast, lunch and a snack.

State

- **Increase the SNAP minimum benefit in Illinois:** Raise the minimum benefit for SNAP from \$23 per month to \$75 per month using state funds. This would particularly help seniors, as many of them are receiving the minimum benefit.
- **Expand SNAP eligibility for college students:** Make all students at public colleges and universities eligible for SNAP, as long as they meet income requirements. Federal rules prohibit college students from receiving SNAP unless they qualify for an exemption, such as working 20 hours per week or having a child. States have broad discretion to exempt more students if their educational program increases job-readiness.
- **Sustainably fund the Illinois Farm to Food Bank Program:** Continue implementing Farm to Food Bank and secure continued funding of \$2.5 million in the FY26 budget. The program connects food banks directly with Illinois farmers to increase the supply of nutritious food for food-insecure Illinoisans.
- **Telephonic Signatures for SNAP:** Continue to advocate to DHS to allow community-based organizations (CBOs) like the food bank to accept signatures over the phone when submitting a SNAP application. A telephonic signature waiver was in place during the pandemic but was rescinded in 2023.
- **Summer EBT Outreach:** Conduct outreach activities to ensure families know about the Summer EBT program and how to obtain and use benefits.





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- **Medicaid 1115 Waiver:** Continue to support the implementation of programs under the 1115 Waiver and *Illinois Healthcare Transformation*

For more information, please reach out to Robert Desio, Sr. Manager of Public Policy and Benefits, at rdesio@northernilfoodbank.org.

