

2024 Federal Priorities

FIGHT HUNGER IN CALIFORNIA

In our nation of abundance, no one should go hungry. Thanks to an effective federal response, hunger in California remained stable during the COVID-19 crisis, despite incredible hardship. Today 1 in 3 Californians faces or is at risk of poverty-related hunger. Deep inequities remain for low-income communities of color, stemming from historical, unjust policy choices. We call on the California Congressional Delegation to take bold, urgent actions needed to end hunger.

Farm Bill Demands Urgent Action to Maximize SNAP's Anti-Hunger & Economic Benefits to California

In 2023, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) supported 5.3 million Californians—nearly 1 in 8 people. SNAP brought \$13 billion in federal food benefits, \$23 billion in total economic activity, and over 173,000 jobs statewide.

SNAP households faced a devastating hunger cliff in March 2023 with the end of Emergency Allotments (EAs), totaling a loss of \$500 million a month statewide, an average of \$180 per household per month. Thankfully, in the bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill, Congress directed the USDA to implement a long overdue update to the Thrifty Food Plan. Yet even with the TFP update, SNAP benefits are still inadequate to maintain a healthy diet; SNAP benefits average just \$6 per person per day.

The proposed \$30 billion Thrifty Food Plan cut to SNAP benefits offers a sobering reminder of the path Congress must avoid. Prior to the 2018 TFP update, SNAP benefits were so out of date that households were expected to purchase huge quantities of raw foods like sacks of potatoes and dried beans with no regard for the time tax to purchase and prepare meals, culturally specific diets, or medical restrictions, let alone modern shopping needs. Hungry Californians have made clear that their priority is for Congress to protect and strengthen SNAP benefit adequacy.

Farm Bill Must Strengthen SNAP's Power to Fight Hunger & Boost the Economy

The 2024 Farm Bill should take policy action commensurate with the critical level of hunger in California, and any proposal to strengthen the anti-hunger safety net must not come at the expense of cuts or toxic offsets to other Farm Bill programs. California anti-hunger Farm Bill priorities include:

- » **Improving Access to Nutrition Act** (H.R. 1510 Lee / S. 2435 Welch)
 - › 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 (SNAP EATS Act)** (H.R. 3183 Gomez / S. 1488 Gillibrand)
 - › Eliminates the outdated and unfair SNAP restrictions for college students.
- » **Closing the Meal Gap Act** (H.R. 3037 Adams / S. 1336 Gillibrand)
 - › 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.
 - › Streamlines the SNAP Standard Excess Medical Deduction for persons who are older adults or have disabilities.
- » **Lift the Bar Act** (H.R. 4170 Jayapal / S. 2038 Hirono)
 - › Broadens the reach of SNAP for lawfully present immigrants by undoing xenophobic restrictions that deny eligibility and have a chilling effect on participation.
- » **Hot Foods Act** (H.R. 3519 Meng, Fitzpatrick / S. 2258 Bennet)
 - › Permanently ends the prohibition on purchasing hot and prepared foods in SNAP.
- » **Re-Entry Support Through Opportunities for Resources & Essentials (RESTORE Act)** (H.R. 3479 Cohen / S. 1753 Booker)
 - › Repeals the SNAP Drug Felony Ban and codifies a USDA administrative waiver to SNAP state agencies that allows individuals to apply for SNAP 30 days prior to their release from incarceration.
- » **OPPOSE: SNAP Nutrition Security Act** (S. 2326 Booker)
 - › We join multi-sector opposition to this bill, which is a step towards restricting choice and dignity for the millions of Californians who rely on SNAP to feed their families.

Bolster the Emergency Food System

Food banks have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis and remain a critically needed resource for millions of Californians who have lost other public supports like Emergency Allotments and are struggling to put food on the table. Operating at maximum capacity, with 78% having scaled back services in some way, food banks continue to face immense challenges in meeting the growing demand.

» **Farmers Feeding America Act** (H.R. 6203 Salinas, Panetta / S. 2713 Casey)

› Provides \$500 million annually in additional funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) entitlement commodities, roughly doubling the total size of the program, and will authorize additional funding for TEFAP Storage & Distribution to better support food banks.

California FY 2025 Budget & Appropriations

» **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):**

› Protect dignity and choice in SNAP by preventing pilots, research, or any related proposal to limit what SNAP recipients can buy with their food benefits.
› Include a permanent extension of USDA authority to reimburse stolen SNAP benefits.

» **School & Summer Meals:** Adequately support state agencies to operate Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), the first federal entitlement program in a generation, and ensure that children in rural and underserved areas have access to nutrition during the summer by providing:

› \$126 million to waive the administrative match requirements.
› \$50 million for technology and implementation grants to support states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations.
› \$10 million for school meal direct certification grants to reduce paperwork for schools.
› \$35 million in school equipment grants 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 \$7.75 billion to serve anticipated caseloads while accounting for rising costs of delivering high quality nutrition services. The appropriation should include set-asides for:

› WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (\$90 million).
› Infrastructure and technical assistance (\$16 million).
› Management information systems (\$50 million).
› Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to provide WIC participants fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables (\$30 million).

» **Child Care Meals:** \$10 million for the Child and Adult Care Food Program's nutrition and wellness education. Funds are crucial to support the USDA's role providing materials, training, and support to states and program operators to bolster nutrition 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:** Allow tribal governments the flexibility to administer federal nutrition programs as decided by the tribe, and improve SNAP access for tribal populations, including allowing participation in both SNAP and FDIPIR.

» **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 SNAP (H.R. 253 / S. 949). The choice and path to transition should be by the territories.

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