



The Cost of Cutting SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is American's first line of defense against hunger, provides significant cost savings for health care needs, and is an economic boost to local economies.

SNAP alleviates hunger, improves nutrition and health, and increases the food-purchasing power of low-income households. The benefits of SNAP reach beyond participants, affecting not only individual health but also the economy in local communities. Any cuts to the program will have wide reaching effects for the individuals participating in the program, their communities, and the entire nation.

> Cuts to SNAP will Decrease the Amount of Nutritious Food for Families Already Struggling to Put Food on the Table.

On average SNAP provides benefits to more than 20.8 million households each month. Almost 50% of the participating households include children, 20% include a person with a disability, and 16% included an elderly person.¹

Currently, the average SNAP recipient receives \$134 per month, or \$1.63 per meal.² For many, SNAP benefits are not enough to last the entire month. Families are already cutting the size of their meals and buying less nutritious food to cope with the inadequate benefit levels. In addition, almost 30% of SNAP recipients have already turned to emergency food in order to supplement their meals.³

Witnesses to Hunger: Joanna C.⁴

"It's the worst pain," says Joanna. "To hear, 'Hey Mom, I'm hungry,' and I can't do anything. That's the worst pain in the whole world."

Joanna works 35 hours a week making food at a convenience store, yet she struggles to put food on her own table. Joanna relies on SNAP to ensure she and her children have the food they need to survive but struggles to buy nutritious food because accessibility and expense. Joanna does her best to make SNAP benefits stretch but more often they run out. When this happens Joanna goes without food for herself to ensure her children have some food in their stomachs.



"When you're counting days and you're counting meals, it's a long time," Cruz says. "It's enough when you get them. When they run out, that's it."

Any cut to SNAP that would decrease Joanna's allotment would mean fewer and less nutritious meals for her and her children – diminishing further an already inadequate benefit. Fewer meals means fewer nutrients for her children and less money going to her local stores to pay those hired to stock the shelves and deliver the products.

¹ Health Impact Project, Initial Findings: Health Impact Assessment of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, <http://www.healthimpactproject.org/news/project/the-health-impact-project-releases-initial-findings-of-a-health-impact-assessment-of-the-u-s-farm-bill>

² Children's HealthWatch, The SNAP Vaccine: Boosting Children's Health, http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SNAP_FINAL1.pdf.

³ Children's HealthWatch, The SNAP Vaccine: Boosting Children's Health.

⁴ Joanna C., Witnesses to Hunger, <http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/our-projects/witnesses-hunger/meet-the-real-experts/joanna-c>

> Cuts to SNAP will Mean Less Nutritious Food for Families and Children Leading to Higher Medical Costs.

Participating in SNAP plays a critical role in preventing malnutrition and obesity. With almost a quarter of young children food insecure in this country, access to adequate amounts of affordable, nutritious food is crucial to a healthy life. Food insecurity, or limited access to sufficient nutritious food, is particularly detrimental to young children because they are in a phase of rapid brain development and growth, laying the foundation for future health and school success.⁵ Children in food insecure households experience higher rates of developmental delays, iron-deficiency anemia (which affects brain growth) and hospitalizations than those who are food secure.



"There is nothing on this earth sadder than not being able to feed your child." – Sherita P.

Access to SNAP in early childhood is also known to be related to reductions in adult obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes.⁶ This could lead to significant long-term healthcare savings for families and for the US as a whole. For example, the medical costs for treating adult obesity per year are between \$147 billion and \$210 billion.⁷

> Cuts to SNAP Means Cuts to the Local Economy and Job Loss

Every \$5 the federal government spends on SNAP generates almost \$9 in community spending as participants use their benefits at their local stores and shops.⁸ That spending increases employment as more people are needed to who pick, process, transport, and sell the food in those local stores. At a time when communities are moving out of a recession, any cuts to SNAP would be a potential loss of millions of dollars that go directly to communities throughout the US.

For every \$1 billion SNAP benefit reduction, there is a loss of an estimated 14,000 jobs – including those in manufacturing and farming.⁹

Conclusion: SNAP Must Be Protected.

Cuts to SNAP will have far-reaching consequences, as children and families will receive inadequate nutrition for healthy brain and body growth. Leading to increased hospitalizations and developmental delays for children. Translating into increased health care costs and children whose brains are not prepared to fully succeed in school. In addition to supporting the health and well-being of families and children, the income from SNAP supports local economies. Cutting SNAP means cutting income and jobs in local communities.

As a nation, we must make a choice – do we want a healthy, strong, adaptable future for our children as they become our leaders or do we want to perpetuate the high levels of hardship and suffering. As members of Congress consider maximizing their return on investment into the American economy and on the health and well-being of our citizens, we urge them to take notice of the positive role that SNAP plays for children, families and our local communities

⁵ Children's HealthWatch, The SNAP Vaccine: Boosting Children's Health,

⁶Health Impact Project, Initial Findings: Health Impact Assessment of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

⁷ Health Impact Project, Initial Findings: Health Impact Assessment of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

⁸ Health Impact Project, Initial Findings: Health Impact Assessment of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

⁹ Health Impact Project, Initial Findings: Health Impact Assessment of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.