

CUTTING FOOD ASSISTANCE IS A BAD DEAL FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps feed millions of women and families.

Millions of people across the country face challenges in feeding their families.¹ Many people are just one job loss, one schedule downgrade, or one sickness away from needing SNAP to help feed their families. In a recent poll, 39 percent of voters said that they had problems having enough money to buy food.²

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, SNAP served more than 44.2 million people in nearly 21.8 million households on average each month.³ SNAP serves people in every community, and SNAP participation is particularly high in rural America.⁴ Half of children in the U.S. will receive SNAP at some point during childhood, and half of all adults will do so at some point between the ages of 20 and 65.⁵ SNAP is particularly important to women:

- Women are 63 percent of adult recipients;⁶
- White women are 24 percent of nonelderly adult recipients and 32 percent of elderly adult recipients;⁷
- Women of color are 34 percent of nonelderly adult recipients and 31 percent of elderly adult recipients;⁸
- 18 percent of non-elderly women recipients are women with disabilities;⁹
- 58 percent of all SNAP households with children are headed by a single adult, 92 percent of them by women;¹⁰
- 44 percent of SNAP recipients are children,¹¹ (3.5 percent of whom have a disability);¹²

- 34 percent of bisexual women, 32 percent of lesbians, and 24 percent of straight women between 18 and 44 report participating in SNAP;¹³ and
- About 15 percent of transgender national survey respondents participate in SNAP.¹⁴

SNAP is critical to the economic security and well-being of women and families.

SNAP is one of many critical programs that help keep low-income women and families out of poverty. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) lifted an estimated 8.4 million people, including 3.8 million children, out of poverty in 2015, resulting in a 17 percent reduction in the poverty rate. SNAP also reduced poverty by 20.9 percent for non-Hispanic Blacks, 17.6 percent for Hispanics, and 15.5 percent for non-Hispanic Whites.¹⁵

In addition, SNAP leads to improved health outcomes for families,¹⁶ as well as improved education, economic self-sufficiency, and other positive outcomes for children who grow up in families with low incomes.¹⁷

Current SNAP proposals would harm women and families.

In December, Republicans in Congress passed, and President Trump signed into law, a tax bill that gives massive new tax cuts to the rich and big corporations, while adding \$1.9 trillion to the deficit.¹⁸ Now these same Republican leaders are expressing alarm at the deficit and proposing to cut or restructure programs, such as SNAP, that are vital for women and families. For example, Trump's FY 2019 budget, an Executive Order on "Economic Mobility,"¹⁹ and a recent request for comment from the Food and Nutrition Service,²⁰ all seek to limit access to this critically important program.

And in particular, the Farm Bill recently passed by House Committee on Agriculture would seriously threaten food security for millions of women and families, if enacted.

1. The House Farm Bill's proposal to restrict categorical eligibility would cause some working women and families to lose access to SNAP, and would increase administrative burdens for many others.

The bill proposes a \$5 billion ten-year cut to SNAP food benefits by eliminating a state option (broad-based categorical eligibility) that allows states to adjust SNAP asset tests and to screen families with gross incomes slightly above 130 percent of the poverty line to determine if their net incomes (after expenses for shelter, child care, or certain other basic expenses) qualify them for a SNAP benefit. Many states have chosen this simplification option.²¹ The proposed change would take SNAP away from low-income working people with children, exacerbate the “cliff effect” when they improve their earnings, eliminate their children’s direct connection to free school meals,²² and significantly increase states’ administrative costs and burdens.

2. The House Farm Bill's proposal to eliminate the connection between SNAP and LIHEAP would cut SNAP benefits for many families.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps an estimated 6.3 million households heat their homes.²³ Currently, states have the flexibility to use a Standard Utility Allowance for households receiving LIHEAP benefits (instead of requiring each of those households to provide documentation of their utility costs in order to receive the utility cost income deduction). This deduction helps families receive higher SNAP benefits, recognizing the need for families to heat their homes and eat. The House Farm Bill proposes to eliminate this LIHEAP-SNAP connection for households without an elderly member, increasing the paperwork burden for families struggling to make ends meet—and cutting SNAP benefits by an estimated \$5.3 billion over ten years.²⁴

3. The House Farm Bill's proposals to expand work requirements threaten particular harm to women and their families.

The majority of adult SNAP recipients who can work, do work.²⁵ And SNAP already contains work requirements: individuals aged 18 through 49 who are not students, pregnant, caring for a child or incapacitated person, and do not have a disability cannot receive SNAP for more than three months in a 36-month period if they do not work or participate in a work training program for at least 20 hours a week. States can currently waive these time

limits for recipients in high unemployment areas.

It is already challenging for many unemployed or underemployed workers to meet SNAP’s current time limits. Women are overrepresented in the low-wage workforce,²⁶ which is plagued by unstable and unpredictable work schedules, nonstandard hours,²⁷ part-time work,²⁸ and few benefits like paid sick leave.²⁹ Women are also especially vulnerable to discrimination and harassment at work,³⁰ which can result in lost hours or job loss.³¹ Domestic violence survivors also face particular challenges obtaining and maintaining employment.³² Moreover, many unemployed or underemployed adults subject to SNAP’s work requirements face considerable barriers to employment. The House Farm Bill proposes harsh changes to SNAP’s work requirements, including:

- *Including people aged 50 to 59 in the work requirements.* This would be particularly harmful for older women, who face longer periods of unemployment. In March 2018, 23 percent of unemployed women aged 45 to 54 years and 31 percent of unemployed women aged 55 to 64 years had been unemployed for six months or more (compared to 22 percent for unemployed women aged 20 to 64 years old).³³
- *Subjecting parents with children aged six and older to the work requirements.* The Farm Bill would change the exception to the work requirement for parents, exempting only parents caring for a child under age six from SNAP’s work requirements. But parents with school-aged children also have significant caregiving responsibilities, including during afterschool hours and school vacations. The conditions of low-wage work, combined with caregiving and shortages of quality, affordable child care, would make it challenging for parents with school-aged children to consistently meet SNAP’s work requirements. Imposing work requirements on parents of school-aged children will ensure that families with children will lose food assistance, which will negatively impact children’s development and health.
- *Increasing the weekly hour requirement from 20 to 25 hours for Fiscal Year 2026 and beyond.* As described above, the nature of low-wage jobs already makes it challenging to meet SNAP’s current work requirement, so increasing the number of hours from 20 to 25 per week could lead to many women and families losing their SNAP benefits.

- *Creating harsher time limits and sanctions for failure to meet the work requirements.* The House Farm Bill would shorten the time period to meet work requirements from three months to one month. In addition, it would bar individuals from receiving SNAP initially for one year, and subsequently for three years, for failing to meet the work requirements. But unemployed women age 16 and older experienced a median 9.6 weeks of unemployment in March 2018,³⁴ meaning that in many cases, unemployed women are almost guaranteed to exceed the time limit and face sanctions.

In addition, the House Farm Bill's proposal is vastly inadequate to guarantee that employment training programs could serve the millions of additional individuals who would be subject to the new, expanded work requirements.³⁵ Overall, it is estimated that over a million people would lose SNAP benefits under the House Farm Bill.³⁶ Taking away food assistance will not help women find jobs any faster; it will just increase hunger for more women and families.

Instead of seeking to prevent women and families from getting the food assistance they need, the Administration and Congress should combat hunger by protecting and strengthening SNAP.

As a nation, we should fight hunger by helping families struggling to make ends meet put food on the table. Congress should increase SNAP benefits so fewer families have to choose between food or other necessities. In addition, Congress and the Administration should invest in workers and families in order to help families attain economic self-sufficiency.

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- 2 JOHN HALPIN & KARL AGNE, CTR. FOR AM. PROGRESS, ENSURING BASIC LIVING STANDARDS FOR ALL: VOTER ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL INSURANCE PROGRAMS IN THE TRUMP ERA (Mar. 7, 2018), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2018/03/07/447412/ensuring-basic-living-standards/>.
- 3 U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HOUSEHOLDS: FISCAL YEAR 2016, at xv (Nov. 2017), available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2016.pdf> [hereinafter USDA CHARACTERISTICS OF SNAP HOUSEHOLDS].
- 4 FOOD RES. & ACTION CTR., SNAP MAP: SNAP MATTERS IN EVERY STATE, <http://frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-map-snap-matters-every-state>.
- 5 FOOD RES. & ACTION CTR., THE ROLE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING (Dec. 2017), available at <http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-role-snap-improving-health-well-being.pdf> [hereinafter FRAC, SNAP IMPROVES HEALTH AND WELL-BEING].
- 6 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on USDA CHARACTERISTICS OF SNAP HOUSEHOLDS - TABLE A.23 - GENDER AND SNAP BENEFITS OF PARTICIPANTS BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS 62 (Nov. 2017), available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2016.pdf> [hereinafter NWLC calculations based on SNAP HOUSEHOLDS - TABLE A.23].
- 7 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2017 CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY using STEVEN RUGGLES ET AL., INTEGRATED PUBLIC USE MICRODATA SERIES (IPUMS): VERSION 6.0 [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015).
- 8 *Id.*
- 9 NWLC calculations based on SNAP HOUSEHOLDS - TABLE A.23, *supra* note 6.
- 10 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on USDA CHARACTERISTICS OF SNAP HOUSEHOLDS - TABLE A.14 - DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATING HOUSEHOLDS, INDIVIDUALS, AND BENEFITS BY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION 52 (Nov. 2017), available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2016.pdf>
- 11 USDA CHARACTERISTICS OF SNAP HOUSEHOLDS, *supra* note 3, at xvi.
- 12 NWLC calculations based on SNAP HOUSEHOLDS - TABLE A.23, *supra* note 6.
- 13 Government data is not available on the percentage of SNAP recipients who are LGBT. The data provided measuring sexual orientation is based on the population-based National Survey of Family Growth, administered in 2011-2013. See TAYLOR N. T. BROWN ET. AL., FOOD INSECURITY AND SNAP PARTICIPATION IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY, THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE 13 (July 2016), available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Food-Insecurity-and-SNAP-Participation-in-the-LGBT-Community.pdf>.
- 14 This data is based on the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, which had 27,715 transgender respondents. Fifteen percent of respondents reported receiving SNAP and/or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). S.E. JAMES ET. AL., THE REPORT OF THE 2015 U.S. TRANSGENDER SURVEY, NAT'L CTR. FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY 142 (Dec. 2016), available at <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>. A small minority of these respondents participated in WIC but not SNAP.
- 15 LAURA WHEATON & VICTORIA TRAN, THE URBAN INST., THE ANTIPOVERTY EFFECTS OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, at V (Feb. 2018), available at https://www.urban.org/research/publication/antipoverty-effects-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program/view/full_report. Researchers used the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure and corrected for the underreporting of SNAP and other means-tested programs. *Id.*

- 16 STEVEN CARLSON & BRYNNE KEITH-JENNINGS, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES, SNAP IS LINKED WITH IMPROVED NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES AND LOWER HEALTH CARE COSTS (Jan. 17, 2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-nutritional-outcomes-and-lower-health-care>.
- 17 FRAC, SNAP IMPROVES HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, *supra* note 5, at 1.
- 18 CONG. BUDGET OFF., THE BUDGET AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: 2018 TO 2028, at 106 (Apr. 2018), *available at* <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53651-outlook.pdf>.
- 19 Exec. Order No. 13828, 83 Fed. Reg. 72,15941 (Apr. 13, 2018).
- 20 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Requirements and Services for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents; Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 83 Fed. Reg. 37,8013 (Feb. 23, 2018).
- 21 U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., BROAD-BASED CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY (Feb. 2018), *available at* <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/BBCE.pdf>.
- 22 See FOOD RES. & ACTION CTR., SNAP AND SCHOOL MEALS, *available at* <http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/snap-categorical-eligibility-and-school-meals.pdf>.
- 23 DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS., ADMIN. FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES, LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, REPORT TO CONGRESS 2014, at vi (Dec. 2016), *available at* https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocs/fy14_liheap_rtc_final.pdf.
- 24 Letter from Cong. Budget Off. to Rep. Michael Conaway, Table 2 - Details of Increases and Decreases in Direct Spending and Revenues of H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, As Introduced on April 12, 2018 (Apr. 13, 2018), *available at* <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr2.pdf>.
- 25 CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES, CHART BOOK: SNAP HELPS STRUGGLING FAMILIES PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE (Feb. 14, 2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table>.
- 26 JASMINE TUCKER & KAYLA PATRICK, NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., LOW-WAGE JOBS ARE WOMEN'S JOBS: THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LOW-WAGE WORK 2 (Aug. 2017), *available at* <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Low-Wage-Jobs-are-Womens-Jobs.pdf>.
- 27 See *generally* JULIE VOGTMAN & JASMINE TUCKER, NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., COLLATERAL DAMAGE: SCHEDULING CHALLENGES FOR WORKERS IN LOW-WAGE JOBS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES (April 2017), *available at* <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Collateral-Damage.pdf>.
- 28 In March 2018, 11.5 percent of women working part-time did so involuntarily. Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on U.S. DEP'T OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, TABLE A-18 EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED FULL- AND PART-TIME WORKERS BY AGE, SEX, RACE, AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, *available at* <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea18.htm>. Involuntary part-time work is especially common in some low-wage sectors, such as retail work. DANIEL SCHNEIDER & KRISTEN HARKNETT, WASH. CTR. FOR EQUITABLE GROWTH, SCHEDULE INSTABILITY AND UNPREDICTABILITY AND WORKER AND FAMILY HEALTH AND WELLBEING 16 (Sept. 2016), *available at* <http://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/schedule-instability-and-unpredictability/>. In addition, many who choose to work part-time voluntarily, especially women, choose to work part-time because they cannot access affordable child care. TUCKER & PATRICK, *supra* note 26, at 8.
- 29 KATHERINE GALLA GHER ROBBINS & JULIE VOGTMAN, NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., LOW-WAGE JOBS HELD PRIMARILY BY WOMEN WILL GROW THE MOST OVER THE NEXT DECADE (Apr. 2016), *available at* <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Low-Wage-Jobs-Held-Primarily-by-Women-Will-Grow-the-Most-Over-the-Next-Decade.pdf>.
- 30 See, e.g., REST. OPPORTUNITIES CTRS. UNITED & FORWARD TOGETHER, THE GLASS FLOOR: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 5 (2014), *available at* http://rocunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/REPORT_The-Glass-Floor-Sexual-Harassment-in-the-Restaurant-Industry2.pdf; HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, CULTIVATING FEAR: THE VULNERABILITY OF IMMIGRANT FARMWORKERS IN THE US TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT (May 2012), *available at* <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/05/15/cultivating-fear/vulnerability-immigrant-farmworkers-us-sexual-violence-and-sexual> (documenting pervasive sexual harassment and violence among immigrant farmworker women); IRMA MORALES WAUGH, EXAMINING THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FARMWORKING WOMEN, 16 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 237, 241 (Jan. 2010), *available at* <http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/16/3/237.abstract> (80 percent of female farmworkers in California's Central Valley reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment); UNITE HERE LOCAL 1, HANDS OFF, PANTS ON: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN CHICAGO'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY (July 2016), *available at* <https://www.handsoffpantson.org/wp-content/uploads/HandsOffReportWeb.pdf> (58 percent of hotel workers and 77 percent of casino workers surveyed reported being sexually harassed by a guest); HART RESEARCH ASSOC., KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF WOMEN FAST FOOD WORKERS (Oct. 5, 2016), *available at* <http://hartresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Fast-Food-Worker-Survey-Memo-10-5-16.pdf> (nationwide survey of workers in the fast food industry found nearly 40 percent of the women reported experiencing unwanted sexual behaviors on the job, and 21 percent of those workers reported that they suffered negative workplaces consequences after raising the harassment with their employer).
- 31 NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE (Nov. 2016), *available at* <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Sexual-Harassment-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.
- 32 INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH, THE ECONOMIC COST OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND STALKING (Aug. 2017), https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/B367_Economic-Impacts-of-IPV-08.14.17.pdf.
- 33 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on U.S. DEP'T OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, LABOR FORCE STATISTICS FROM THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, TABLE A-36 (last accessed Apr. 18, 2018), *available at* <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea36.htm> [hereinafter NWLC calculations based on Labor Force Statistics].
- 34 NWLC calculations based on Labor Force Statistics. Unemployed women ages 55-64 experienced a longer median duration of unemployment (13.6 weeks). *Id.*
- 35 The House Farm Bill proposes \$1 billion a year in funding, but the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that a national employment and training program would cost \$15 billion a year. ED BOLEN ET. AL, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES, CHAIRMAN CONAWAY'S FARM BILL WOULD INCREASE FOOD INSECURITY AND HARDSHIP 8, *available at* <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/4-16-18fa.pdf>.
- 36 PHILIP BRASHER, FARM BILL'S SNAP REFORMS TEE UP PARTISAN FIGHT, AGRI-PULSE (April 12, 2018), <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/10838-farm-bills-snap-reforms-tee-up-partisan-fight>.