

20 hour weekly work requirements. Even before this pandemic, [nearly half of all college students](#) experienced food insecurity. Now with school closures, students are at further risk of going hungry.

- **The Trump administration is seeking to restrict access and weaken SNAP benefits even further:** Even in the midst of a pandemic and the [greatest unemployment crisis since the Great Depression](#), the [USDA is continuing to push for implementation](#) of a harsh rule that would impose stricter time limits and take food away from 700,000 people. The administration has also issued a proposal to [restrict states' ability to use Broad Based Categorical Eligibility \(BBCE\)](#), which would take free school meals away from 1 million children, and another to [lower SNAP benefits for nearly 1 in 5 households](#) by changing how states account for utility costs when determining benefits.

SNAP helps the national economy recover during recessions.

SNAP is one of the most effective and responsive federal programs in an economic downturn. SNAP is an automatic stabilizer, [expanding to cover additional households in times of need](#) and shrinking as the economy improves. During the last recession, increasing SNAP benefits [lessened food insecurity](#), [prevented an additional 1 million people from falling into poverty](#), and [stimulated our economy](#). Every [one dollar spent in SNAP benefits generates between \\$1.50 and \\$1.80](#) in economic activity.

Expansions of SNAP during the COVID crisis have not gone far enough to keep children from going hungry.

[Families First](#) and the [CARES Act](#) improved SNAP, but did not go far enough to meet the growing needs of people who have lost jobs or wages and are going hungry across the country. So far, Congress has made improvements to SNAP by:

- **Suspending time limits through end of the public health epidemic**, ensuring that parents will not be subjected to harsh work requirements;
- Creating a new [Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer \(P-EBT\)](#), which allows children who would have received free or reduced school meals access to SNAP while schools are closed due to COVID-19;
- Allowing states to **provide emergency SNAP benefits to households up to the maximum monthly benefit allotment** for up to two months

and more flexibility for states managing their caseloads; and

- Providing **\$15.5 billion for SNAP administrative funds** and to help offset the rising costs of applications.

House Democrats recently released the [HEROES Act](#), which includes many other important changes to SNAP that should be maintained as the next COVID relief package moves through Congress. **The next COVID relief package must:**

- **Boost the maximum SNAP benefits by 15 percent**, which would provide an extra \$100 a month for an average family of four.
- **Increase the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30** and switch from the Thrifty Food Plan to the Low-Cost Food Plan to accurately calculate food costs to improve the health and well-being of families.
- **Suspend all SNAP administrative rules** that would terminate or weaken benefits.
- **Expand program eligibility for SNAP and Pandemic EBT**, including by allowing young children who are enrolled in childcare feeding programs and college students to qualify.
- Enhance and restructure SNAP administrative processes by **waiving requirements for in-person meetings** and connecting SNAP applicants to other social programs, and provide enough funding to meet increased caseload demands.
- **Allow the purchasing of hot foods in grocery stores and foods at restaurants.**
- **Waive harsh work requirements** until the economic downturn ends.

Beyond this pandemic, hungry children need long-term solutions.

Congress must ensure that any changes to SNAP now are part of a long-term strategy to make real, permanent changes to the program's limitations. This should include changing the SNAP formula to the Low Cost Food Plan to further take into account how much people spend on food, permanently increase the minimum benefit amount as outlined in the [Closing the Meal Gap Act](#), and removing harsh and arbitrary time limits on assistance, as outlined in the [Improving Access to Nutrition Act](#), to ensure that no child in America goes to bed hungry.