



## SNAP: An Effective Program Proven to Reduce Poverty in Pennsylvania

*The Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) is one of the most efficient and effective government programs. Each year it helps 40 million Americans put food on the table. Some elected leaders are pushing extreme proposals that would radically restructure SNAP and other essential benefits, forcing many families to lose vital assistance.*

### SNAP is one of Pennsylvania's most effective anti-poverty programs.

- In Pennsylvania, 1,548,720 people lived below the poverty line in 2017. Each year from 2009-2012 SNAP kept an average of 342,000 people out of poverty in Pennsylvania, including 138,000 children.
- Nationwide, SNAP prevented 3.4 million people from falling into poverty in 2017, including 1.5 million children.

### Children who receive SNAP also reap long-term benefits.

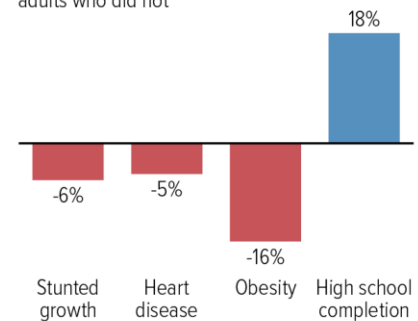
- Studies show that children in households receiving SNAP do better in school, are healthier, and earn more as adults.
- Children in households receiving SNAP are less likely to be underweight or at risk of developmental delays than children in families that were eligible for SNAP but didn't receive it.

### Most households receiving SNAP are working households.

- In Pennsylvania, 47.6% of households had at least 1 person working within a year of receiving benefits, totaling 187,284 people. High SNAP caseloads are not because of the program or people not working. Too many jobs don't pay enough.

### Children With Access to SNAP Fare Better Years Later

Percentage-point change in outcomes for adults who received SNAP as children, compared to adults who did not



Note: The study compared individuals who had access to SNAP (then food stamps) in early childhood after its introduction in the 1960s and early 1970s to similar children who did not (because they were born before its introduction) in each county.

Source: Hoynes, Schanzenbach, and Almond, "Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net," *American Economic Review*, April 2016.

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## Overall, SNAP is an extremely efficient program:

- **Has low administrative costs.** In 2017, approximately 93% of federal SNAP spending went directly towards food benefits.
- **Reaches those who qualify for it.** In a typical month in 2015, 83% of people who were eligible for SNAP benefits got them.
- **Has low error rates.** In FY17 the error rate for over and underpayments was 6.3%.

## Taking food away from people won't help them find a job

Congress and the administration are pushing proposals that would take SNAP and essential assistance away from people if they have trouble finding or keeping a job. Such efforts don't result in more employment and lead to increased hardship and suffering among some of the most vulnerable populations in Pennsylvania. Increased work requirements will:

- **Force individuals into short-term, temporary jobs** that don't pay well, which makes it harder to obtain full-time, permanent employment with a living wage.
  - To fulfill work requirements, people are forced to take the first available job. As a result, they must take lower-wage positions instead of spending time to find a better paying job or pursue additional training opportunities.
- **Fail to address serious barriers to employment.** Many people who are unable to maintain stable employment face issues like:
  - A lack of transportation, affordable child care, or available jobs in the area
  - A serious skills gap
  - Discrimination due to race, age, or criminal record
  - Inconsistent work hours
- **Harm children.** If a family member or caregiver is cut off from SNAP, the entire family suffers.
- **Increase an already large bureaucracy.** Stricter work requirements would force millions more Americans to report their hours to state agencies, which are already understaffed. The additional paperwork and red tape not only adds a barrier that could prevent people from accessing their benefits, it also increases the likelihood of errors resulting in more people wrongly losing benefits.

Increased work requirements aren't effective because they force people to find work without the adequate resources to help them get and keep a good job.

## There are proven policies outside of harsh time limits that reduce poverty

The best path out of poverty is a good job with a good wage. Other federal programs and policies act as powerful tools that would create jobs and raise wages.

### Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for adults not raising children.

- The EITC prevents more people from falling into or deeper into poverty than any other program.
- In Pennsylvania the EITC and Child Tax Credit (CTC) lifted 223,000 people out of poverty each year, on average, from 2011-2013.
- Expanding the EITC for adults not raising children would:
  - Help at least 7 million people nationwide
  - Create a stronger work incentive
  - Disproportionately benefit young workers of color
  - Help reduce recidivism

### Lift the bans on SNAP, housing assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for individuals with criminal records.

- As of 2015, Pennsylvania has modified the ban on individuals accessing SNAP if they have a felony drug conviction. Formerly incarcerated individuals in Pennsylvania already face significant barriers to employment and successfully reentering society.

### Create a subsidized jobs program.

- A program like this can boost earnings and employment among specific populations with low-incomes and barriers to work. These programs would allow people to gain necessary skills, build a work history, and lower the risk for employers to hire people with barriers to employment. Programs like these give people the chance to support themselves and their families, which in turn helps set people onto the path of economic progress.