



April 2017

Basic Needs

Cuts to SNAP will harm hungry Ohioans

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Introduction

Federal food assistance feeds over 1.4 million Ohioans in over 700,000 households.¹ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is the nation's most effective anti-hunger program. Food aid, which reduces poverty and improves health for children and adults, is authorized through the federal Farm Bill. Congress reauthorizes food and agriculture programs every five years. Historically, reauthorization has been a bipartisan process and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle considered SNAP a crucial nutrition program as well as an important revenue source for businesses that accept it. This year Republican lawmakers are planning to make significant changes that will make it harder for hungry people to get the food they need and reduce business at local grocery stores. The House Agriculture Committee passed their version of the 2018 House Farm Bill along party lines. Charmain Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas) was the architect of the bill that proposes new restrictions to food aid that will increase hunger. The bill calls for stringent work requirements for older adults who are not disabled and do not have minor children in their custody. These requirements have not historically helped lift people out of poverty but have resulted in lost coverage. Also there are changes that will harm children's access to food assistance. To pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, lawmakers are now proposing changes to SNAP that will harm workers, older adults, and children.

SNAP feeds Ohio

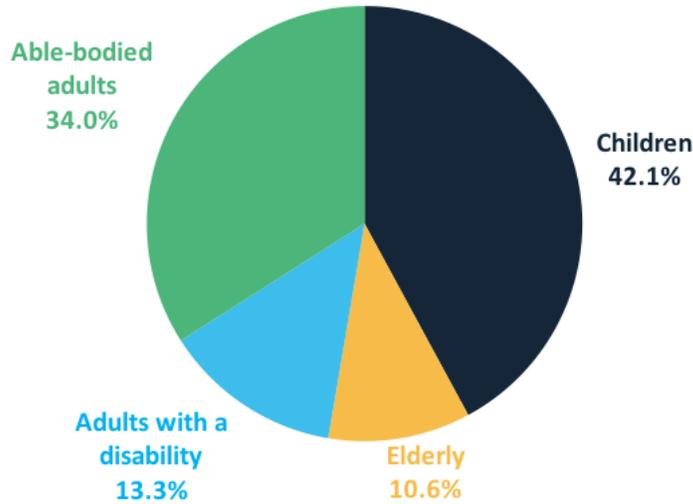
Ohio ranks 40th worst in hunger (now called "food insecurity" by the United States Department of Agriculture or USDA) with 14.8 percent of households experiencing food insecurity. The USDA says a household is food insecure when lack of money or other resources reduced food intake or disrupts eating patterns of one or more household members during the year. The national food insecurity rate is 13 percent, so Ohioans would be especially harmed by federal cuts to SNAP.² Two-thirds of SNAP recipients are from vulnerable populations: 42 percent are children, 11 percent are elderly and 13 percent are adults with disabilities (see figure 1).³

¹ "Public Assistance Monthly Statistics Report." Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, January 2018 <https://bit.ly/2IHBOIL>

² Alisha Coleman-Jensen et al., "Household Food Security in the United States in 2016" (United States Department of Agriculture, September 2017), <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf?v=42979>.

³ "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015," U.S. Department of Agriculture <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2015.pdf>

Figure 1
Ohio SNAP recipients by demographic



Source: Policy Matters Ohio based on United States Department of Agriculture, "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015"

To qualify for SNAP a family must live at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line, \$31,980 for a family of four.⁴ Food assistance allows low-income families to buy a modest diet of nutritious food. On average, SNAP provides about \$1.40 per meal and recipients have diets similar to other low-income people.⁵ SNAP helps struggling families and workers put healthy food on their tables and is the front line against hunger. According to a Feeding America analysis, SNAP provides 12 meals for every one meal that Feeding America’s network of food bank provides. Private charities cannot compensate for proposed cuts. Instead, more people in our community would go hungry.⁶

SNAP improves health and reduces poverty

Children are the largest group helped by SNAP and the benefits to their health and well-being extend beyond childhood. Food-insecure children whose families received SNAP have greater high school completion and lower rates of obesity, heart disease and stunted growth than food-insecure children whose families did not.⁷ Medical costs for low-income adult SNAP participants are about 25 percent less per year than low-income adult non-SNAP participants. The difference is even greater for those with hypertension and coronary heart disease.⁸ SNAP kept 419,000 people in Ohio out of poverty, including 187,000 children.⁹

⁴ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. "Am I Eligible for SNAP? | Food and Nutrition Service." Accessed April 9, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2IDqeat>
⁵ Dean, Stacy. "President’s Budget Would Shift Substantial Costs to States and Cut Food Assistance for Millions." Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, May 23, 2017. <https://bit.ly/2BugPOw>
⁶ Knott, Matt. "Feeding America Statement On President’s Proposed Budget for FY 2019." Feeding America, February 12, 2018. <http://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/press-room/statement-on-proposed-budget.html>
⁷ Carlson, Steven, Dottie Rosenbaum, Brynne Keith-Jennings, and Caitlin Nchako. "SNAP Works for America’s Children." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 28, 2016. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-works-for-americas-children>
⁸ Carlson, Steven, and Brynne Keith-Jennings. "SNAP Is Linked with Improved Nutritional Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 16, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2DJgg23>
⁹ Nchako, Caitlin, and Lexin Cai. "A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 14, 2013. https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_ohio.pdf

The phrase “able-bodied” is not informative

Two-thirds of food aid recipients in Ohio are people we do not expect to work: children, the elderly, and adults with disabilities. A small portion of people receiving food aid are able-bodied adults without dependent children. In Ohio, research has found many of those people have mental and physical disabilities, have children not in their custody, or are taking care of elderly or disabled family members. A Franklin County report on people who participated in the Ohio Association of Foodbanks’ Work Experience Program found 30.8 percent of clients reported a physical or mental health limitation. Many are caregivers; 24.4 percent of clients said they have children not in their custody and another 13 percent are caregivers for a parent, relative, or friend. Low income people in this group also face other barriers to work. For instance, 30 percent have no high school diploma or GED.¹⁰ Despite these challenges, most of them are working.

Workers in low-wage jobs need SNAP

Able-bodied adults without dependents helped by food aid work. Current federal law limits benefits to three months out of a 36-month period for those working less than 20 hours a week. Most use SNAP because their jobs pay low wages and irregular scheduling keeps them below 40 hours a week. Poor job quality drives the need for SNAP, not lack of working. In Ohio, 10 percent of all workers, 523,800 people, are SNAP participants.¹¹ More than 43 percent of SNAP participants in Ohio are in working families. Additionally, in eight of Ohio’s 13 most common occupations, the median wage is not high enough to eliminate the need for food assistance for a family of three (see Table 1).¹²

Job Title	Total Ohio Jobs	Median Hourly Wage	Median Annual Salary	Salary as share of 3-person federal poverty line
Food Preparation and Serving*	163,790	\$9.10	\$18,928	93%
Retail Salespersons*	157,460	\$10.38	\$21,590	106%
Registered Nurses	128,030	\$29.95	\$62,296	305%
Cashiers*	117,390	\$9.31	\$19,364	95%
Laborers & Freight, Stock, Material Movers, hand*	111,230	\$12.26	\$25,500	125%
Waiters and Waitresses*	98,150	\$9.15	\$19,032	93%
Office Clerks, General	92,350	\$14.05	\$29,224	143%
Customer Service Reps	88,310	\$14.94	\$31,075	152%
Janitors and Cleaners*	85,470	\$11.22	\$23,338	114%
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	84,580	\$11.35	\$23,608	116%
Secretaries and Admin Assts.	76,950	\$16.24	\$33,779	165%
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	70,740	\$20.07	\$41,746	204%
Nursing Assistants	66,800	\$11.96	\$24,877	122%
Total	1,341,250			

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, 2016 data

Better paying jobs, not harsher and ineffective work requirements, move people out of poverty. To encourage self-sufficiency and economic mobility, SNAP must be responsive to

¹⁰ Brynne Keith-Jenning “A Comprehensive Assessment of Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents and Their Participation in the Work Experience Program in Franklin County, Ohio.” Ohio Association of Food Banks, 2015. <https://bit.ly/2EyAhqK>

¹¹ “Interactive Map: SNAP Helps Low-Wage Workers in Every State,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 5, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2gv3dq1>

¹² Amy Hanauer, “State of Working Ohio 2017” (Policy Matters Ohio, September 1, 2017). <https://bit.ly/2wVLels>

the needs of working adults who participate. For workers, SNAP functions as a support for low wages and mitigates hardship during recessions when under- or unemployment rises. Analysis of working-age SNAP participants from 2009 to 2013 found that during a typical month, 75 percent of adults who participate in SNAP worked either that month or within the last year. Nearly two-thirds of able-bodied adults without dependents who participated in SNAP during the period received it for less than two years and most worked the majority of the months they received benefits.¹³ In Ohio, some of the largest and best-known employers have large number of employees participating in SNAP. The employers include household names Like Target, Cleveland Clinic, Bob Evans and Amazon.¹⁴

Work requirement don't improve long-term employment

Able-bodied adults without dependents are already required to work. Research shows imposing harsher work requirements will not improve this group's economic mobility or long-term employment. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found work requirements for people enrolled in the cash assistance component of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are largely ineffective at reducing poverty or increasing long-term employment. Cash assistance recipients not subject to work requirements had the same or better employment outcomes than those required to work. An analysis of cash assistance recipients in Columbus found a statistically insignificant difference in employment outcomes for those subject and not subject to work requirement. A year or two later, participants subject to work requirements had only a 1.7 percent higher rate of working. After five years, the difference was only 0.3 percent. Research shows people with significant barriers to finding employment usually do not find work.¹⁵ For SNAP participants with these hurdles, harsher work requirements will not help them become employed and move out of poverty, but will reduce their access to food.

Proposed cuts to food aid

The House Agriculture Committee's partisan Farm Bill proposes several inefficient and harmful changes to SNAP to pay for tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy. Chairman Conaway's bill would cut \$17 billion in SNAP benefit cuts over 10 years. These changes will make it harder for hungry families to eat. Below are key changes that will harm Ohioans struggling to make ends meet.

Imposing harsher work requirements

Under current law, adults aged 18-49 must meet work requirements to receive food assistance. The House Agriculture Committee has proposed increasing the age of adults subject to work requirement to 59 for those not raising children under six. The bill also seeks to punish participants who are unable to meet the requirement. A working-age adult who doesn't meet the work requirement for one month would be made ineligible for SNAP benefits for 12 months and then for 36 months for subsequent violations. Provisions like this will harm unemployed workers who are trying to get back on their feet. Starting in 2026, SNAP participants subject to work requirements would be required to work 25 hours per week instead of 20 to receive food assistance. Increasing the working age for SNAP participants will increase hunger among older adults. Older workers face unique challenges in finding a job and staying employed. They need more time to find work than younger workers.

¹³ Keith-Jennings, Brynne, and Raheem Chaudhry. "Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 14, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2pJxFaO>

¹⁴ Jackson, Victoria. "SNAP Feeds Ohio." Policy Matters Ohio. Accessed April 3, 2018. <http://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/pathways-out-of-poverty/basic-needs-unemployment-compensation/snap-feeds-ohio>

¹⁵ LaDonna Pavetii, "Work Requirements Don't Cut Poverty, Evidence Shows" (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 6, 2016), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/work-requirements-dont-cut-poverty-evidence-shows>

In 2015, on average it took older workers 36 weeks to find work compared to 26 weeks for young workers.¹⁶ A survey by AARP, found two-thirds of older adults think age discrimination in employment is a serious barrier.¹⁷ Raising the age for work requirements will harm older adults who struggle with employment.

The bill proposes requiring states to offer job placement and training programs for everyone who is not exempt from the 20-hour-per week work requirement. Not only is this requirement unrealistic, it's also underfunded. The Farm Bill would allocate \$1 billion nationally for work programs, for the needed 3 million work program slots. That is about \$300 a year per work-program slot, far below the cost of meaningful job training programs. High quality job training, skill-building, and other such employment services cost \$3,000 to \$14,000 a slot (with the length of the slots varying)¹⁸ Additionally, most of the placements would not improve participants' skills or move them to secure and sustainable employment that improves their financial situations.

Eliminating categorical eligibility

The House Farm Bill proposes limiting categorical eligibility for food assistance. Categorical eligibility reduces bureaucratic red tape. Categorical eligibility allows people who are recipients of other public benefits like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and supplemental security income to have a more streamlined process for qualifying for food assistance. If categorical eligibility is eliminated, states and local governments will have to increase staff and spend more money and time establishing eligibility for some SNAP participants.

Eliminating categorical eligible will create additional barriers for low-income families that rely on food aid. Children who receive food assistance are categorically eligible for free and reduced school lunch. Eliminating categorical eligibility could make it harder for hungry children to qualify for free and reduced lunch resulting in thousands of children losing access to the program. When children lack adequate nutrition, both their health and education suffer.

Child support

The Chairman's proposal would require custodial and non-custodial parents to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement (CSE) in order to receive SNAP benefits. Under this proposal, custodial parents would be required to open a case for child support with CSE. There are several reasons why a custodial parent may not seek formal child support order: They an informal arrangement, the non-custodial parent is unable to pay, or they have a reason for not want to engage with the custodial parent. The CSE requirement could have several harmful consequences. In states with the policy, parents were sanctioned by having their portion and food aid cut if they are not cooperating with CSE. The goal of the policy is to take food away from low-income parents and children by reducing their overall food budget. If both parents work with CSE, there is no evidence that this proposal would increase child support payments without increasing a child's risk of hunger. According to Census estimates, 72 percent of custodial families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level access CSE services. Increased cooperation with CSE does not mean children will have access to more resources. Additionally, low-income non-custodial parents often struggle financially: Noncustodial parents with incomes of \$10,000 a year or less hold an estimated 70 percent of child support debt.¹⁹

¹⁶ Miller, Mark. "Age Discrimination and Lost Income Are Hurting Older Workers." Money, September 8, 2016. <https://ti.me/2vek7U8>

¹⁷ Palmer, Kimberly. "10 Facts About Age Discrimination in the Workplace." AARP. Accessed April 9, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2gDUkKK>

¹⁸ Greenstein, Robert. "Greenstein: Conaway SNAP Proposals Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 12, 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/press/statements/greenstein-conaway-snap-proposals-would-increase-food-insecurity-and-hardship>.

¹⁹ Rosenbaum et al. "Chairman Conaway's Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 16, 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chairman-conaways-farm-bill-would-increase-food-insecurity-and-hardship>.

Moreover, this proposal would create extra administrative costs for CSE without much benefit for children. In 2014, Utah found requiring cooperation with CSE for parents would cost the state an additional \$2.6 \$ to 3.2 million each year to hire more staff to handle new cases and systems changes. The Congressional Budget Office estimates this change would cost \$7.2 billion in administrative cost nationally over 10 years.²⁰

SNAP helps the economy

SNAP responds quickly to economic downturns and helps unemployed workers. During a recession, a \$1 increase in spending generates \$1.70 in economic activity. SNAP supports communities when a major employer leaves an area. The unemployed workers who become eligible are still able to buy groceries at local stores, supporting those businesses. In Ohio, SNAP is an important revenue source for big box stores, grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers’ markets and others. In 2016, 9,644 retailers in Ohio redeemed over \$2.4 billion in benefits.²¹ Table 2 below shows the number of retailers accepting SNAP by Congressional district.

Table 2		
SNAP retailers by Congressional district		
Congressional District	Number of Retailers	Congressperson
District 1	599	Rep. Steve Chabot
District 2	634	Rep. Brad Wenstrup
District 3	803	Rep. Joyce Beatty
District 4	587	Rep. Jim Jordan
District 5	527	Rep. Robert Latta
District 6	701	Rep. Bill Johnson
District 7	518	Rep. Bob Gibbs
District 8	520	Rep. Warren Davidson
District 9	746	Rep. Marcy Kaptur
District 10	572	Rep. Michael Turner
District 11	834	Rep. Marcia Fudge
District 12	456	Rep. Patrick Tiberi
District 13	668	Rep. Tim Ryan
District 14	497	Rep. David Joyce
District 15	507	Rep. Steve Stivers
District 16	475	Rep. James Renacci

Source: Policy Matters Ohio based on “SNAP Is an Important Public-Private Partnership,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

SNAP is a critical way to keep Ohioans fed and healthy. For workers, SNAP is an important supplement to low wages, unpredictable scheduling, and unemployment. Additionally, it supports our economy during tough times. Local food retailers also rely on SNAP for revenue.

²⁰ *Ibid.*
²¹ “SNAP Is an Important Public-Private Partnership,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://www.cbpp.org/snap-is-an-important-public-private-partnership#Ohio>

Recommendations

Congress should not make it harder for people to afford to eat by creating additional hoops to jump through. SNAP must remain an effective nutrition program for hungry Ohioans whether they are seniors living on a fixed income, working mothers earning \$10 an hour, or homeless veterans. To ensure SNAP continues to reduce food insecurity, decrease poverty, and support workers, Congress should approve a farm bill that does the following:

- **Prevents additional work requirements that would harm workers and make it harder for older adults to access food.** SNAP should be responsive to workers facing low wages, unpredictable scheduling and unemployment. Older adults with greater challenges to finding employment should not have their access to food cut.
- **Preserves access to waivers for high unemployment areas.** SNAP provides an important safety net for unemployed and under-employed workers. People should not be punished because their communities don't have enough good jobs.
- **Preserves categorical eligibility.** Do not create additional administrative barriers to accessing food assistance. More barriers to qualifying for free and reduced lunch should not be imposed.
- **Does not require parents to cooperate with** Child Support Enforcement to receive benefits because it unlikely to reduce food insecurity for children.

For the thousands of Ohioans who work and receive SNAP, harsher work requirements will not move them to self-sufficiency or make them more economically mobile. Only higher wages and better hours can eliminate their need for food assistance. For people to become self-sufficient they cannot be hungry. The House Agriculture Committee's partisan and harmful Farm Bill punishes nearly every type of SNAP participant, including children and their parents, people with disabilities, older workers, and people who are working or in between jobs. It would also hurt retailers and local economies. SNAP must remain an effective nutrition program to meet the needs of food-insecure Ohioans.

Acknowledgements

For funding that enabled us to do this work, we are grateful to:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

The Saint Luke's Foundation

The George Gund Foundation

The Ford Foundation