

In collaboration with the Feeding PA
network of food banks and Just Harvest

PHILABUNDANCE

Pennsylvania's Hunger Cliff:

The Devastating Loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments
& the Need to Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill



A STRONG FARM BILL

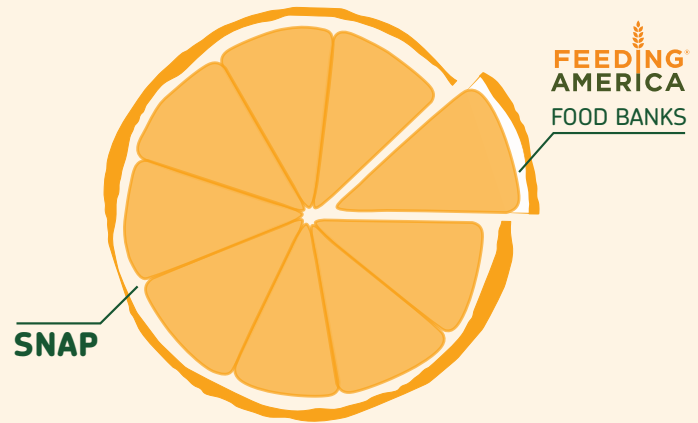
The Farm Bill is up for reauthorization in 2023. Congress has the opportunity to pass a strong Farm Bill that makes improvements to and investments in critical food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Our communities are reeling from the loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments, and any further cuts to SNAP would be catastrophic. We urge Congress to **protect and strengthen SNAP in the 2023 Farm Bill** – rejecting any efforts that weaken SNAP, while pushing for legislation that increases benefit adequacy and removes barriers to equitable access.

SNAP: THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST HUNGER

SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger program in the United States. It is the cornerstone of our nation's nutrition and food security safety net. In 2022, SNAP helped over 41 million people put food on the table. SNAP participants receive monthly benefits through Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, which they can use like debit cards to purchase groceries. SNAP benefits are timely, targeted, and highly

responsive to need. These benefits improve the food security, financial security, and health of recipients.

- 1 in 10 Pennsylvanians are food insecure.
- The vast majority of SNAP recipients are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- 1 in 11 Pennsylvania workers rely on SNAP.



Charitable food programs alone are unable to fully support those facing hunger. The combination of food banks and government assistance programs are necessary to help bridge the meal gap. For every one meal the Feeding America national network of food banks provides, SNAP provides nine.

SNAP EMERGENCY ALLOTMENTS

Since March 2020, SNAP recipients had been temporarily receiving an "extra SNAP" payment in the second half of the month to help them afford food amid the challenges caused by the pandemic. These extra SNAP payments - known as

SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs) - were a lifeline to struggling Pennsylvanians, particularly as historic inflation has increased the cost of food and other basic necessities. Under this relief measure, SNAP recipients' monthly benefits were increased to the maximum amount for their household size. Those who already qualified for the maximum received an additional \$95. USDA approved Pennsylvania's requests to issue these federally funded EAs each month for nearly three years. Congress put an end to SNAP EAs, and Pennsylvanians received their final extra SNAP payment at the end of February 2023.

1 IN 10
Pennsylvanians are food insecure

DEVASTATING CUTS TO SNAP IMPACT
1.88 MILLION ENROLLED PENNSYLVANIANS

35%
children

26%
people with
disabilities

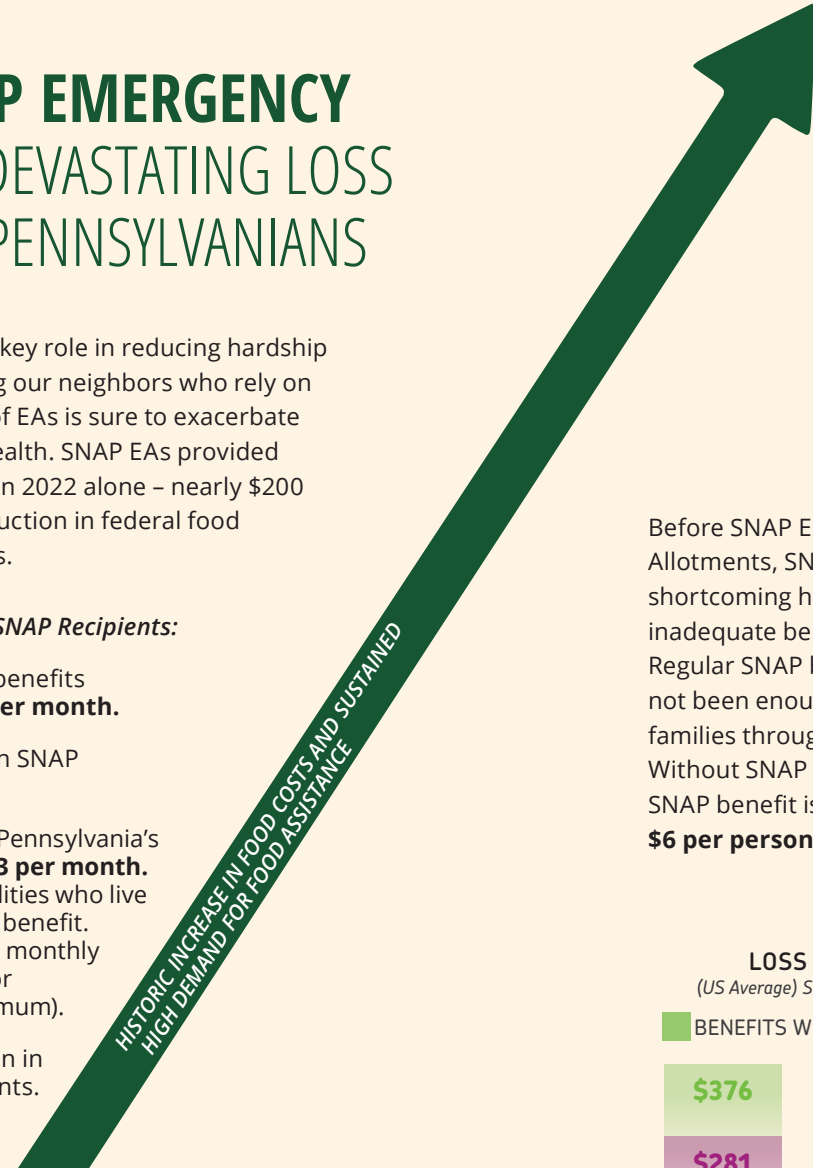
19%
older adults

THE END OF SNAP EMERGENCY ALLOTMENTS: A DEVASTATING LOSS FOR LOW-INCOME PENNSYLVANIANS

SNAP Emergency Allotments played a key role in reducing hardship for vulnerable Pennsylvanians, helping our neighbors who rely on SNAP put food on the table. The loss of EAs is sure to exacerbate food insecurity across the Commonwealth. SNAP EAs provided Pennsylvania with a total of \$2 billion in 2022 alone – nearly \$200 million each month. This is a huge reduction in federal food assistance with harmful consequences.

Impact on Pennsylvania's 1.88 million SNAP Recipients:

- On average, PA households' SNAP benefits were reduced by **\$92 per person per month**.
- At minimum, households lost \$95 in SNAP benefits per month.
- Many households lost much more. Pennsylvania's **minimum SNAP benefit is just \$23 per month**. Many seniors and those with disabilities who live alone only qualify for the minimum benefit. They saw a steep \$258 drop in their monthly benefit (from the \$281 maximum for a household of one to the \$23 minimum).
- The loss represents a 36% reduction in purchasing power for SNAP recipients.



\$2 billion
provided to Pennsylvanians in 2022



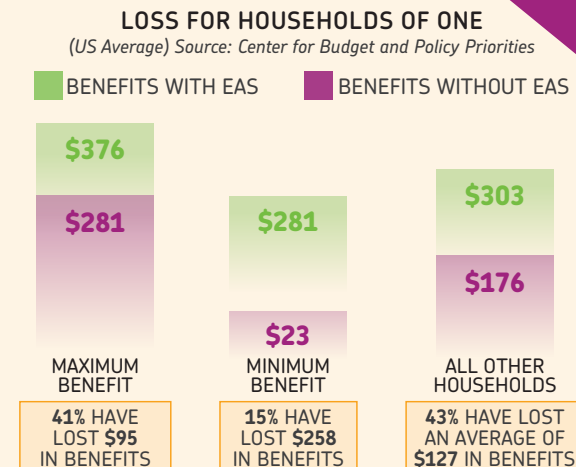
THE HUNGER CLIFF

Robust federal supports made available in recent years that helped millions of families put food on the table have ended, including:

- Federal stimulus checks
- Expanded Child Tax Credit
- Farmers to Families food boxes and added TEFAP support
- Free school and summer meals for all children
- Greater flexibilities for programs like CSFP and WIC

Before SNAP Emergency Allotments, SNAP's biggest shortcoming had long been inadequate benefit amounts. Regular SNAP benefits have not been enough to get most families through the month. Without SNAP EAs, the average SNAP benefit is now only about **\$6 per person per day**.

Pennsylvanians are now facing the biggest loss of support yet – billions in SNAP Emergency Allotments – while food inflation remains historically high, creating a hunger cliff.



THE END OF SNAP EMERGENCY ALLOTMENTS IS CAUSING GREAT HARM TO OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Without SNAP EAs, families are being forced to make impossible tradeoffs between food and other necessities. Our neighbors are already struggling to make ends meet after a loss of this magnitude. Any further cuts to SNAP would be catastrophic. Hear from Pennsylvanians in their own words...

“My wife is a cancer patient with expenses like prescriptions not covered and copays through the roof...and I'm 76 years old with a quadruple heart bypass operation, a carotid artery operation and other illnesses along with that. I am no longer able to hold a job, part or full-time. The extra income for food was a Godsend, as we could finally afford to eat something besides peanut butter and crackers. We're back to \$23 a month which does not even cover eggs, milk, and butter now.”

- Ronald, Philadelphia County

“You try to weigh it out - I need to get my medicine, and I need to get food. You're weighing a lot of things based on what is important. Your medicine's important because you need that for your health and wellbeing...but also, you need the food for that same reason! So, it's really been hard.”

- Valerie, Philadelphia County

“It's really scary when you have to worry about whether you're going to pay your rent or feed your kid. And my rent went up in January as well so it was already getting tougher. I live in a two-person household - it's myself and my 13-year-old autistic son. I was struggling since January but at least I knew I was getting the [extra SNAP] so I didn't worry about food. But when they took it away, my life and my son's life were turned upside down.”

- Anonymous, Lehigh County

\$168 average monthly loss for seniors



“I am 93 years old and live on my Social Security with no savings. They have just taken \$200 a month away from my food buying. How can I live on \$78 a month for food? I buy no nonessentials and I can't afford to go to the dentist. I am really concerned.”

- Olive, Montgomery County



Use the QR code to watch how this loss is impacting Willow Grove SDA Church's food pantry and the people they serve.

“I work full time and rent a house with no utilities included so by the time I pay \$775 rent, \$300 electric, \$135 water, internet and phones, car payments, and insurance...I have nothing left. I don't make a lot and [without SNAP Emergency Allotments] I am only eligible for \$90 [in SNAP benefits]. The additional [SNAP benefits] helped my family so much to be able to eat. I don't know what we will do. I don't know how we will make it without paying our basic bills.”

- Anonymous, Allegheny County

“We now have to choose between bills and food more than before. Prices are rising and we can't keep up. We shouldn't have to decide if we can eat or have heat, buy groceries or pay the rent.”

- Anonymous, Franklin County

“I don't know how we are going to make it on just a retirement income. The extra SNAP saved us. Now I have to decide between food or paying a bill. What can I most do without?”

- Rhonda, Potter County

“Having the extra benefits allowed us to eat like normal people. Now going to \$23 a month will be extremely hard on us. My wife and I have medical issues and eating decent should be a given, not a luxury. In my 73 years, I never thought I would be living like this: from a two-income household to poverty. I'm a Vietnam vet, gave my all to my country, and yet a decent meal is far and few between.”

- Jim, Erie County

“I'm fully disabled on SSDI. Because of my disability, I'm only able to eat certain food. Gas prices, food, utility costs, my portion of rent and other bills such as insurance, all have outpaced any increases in SSDI. The second emergency SNAP allotment at the end of each month was essential. I lost around \$150 in SNAP benefits when extra emergency benefits stopped. I'm already underweight and losing more weight because I can't afford to eat enough calories, going hungry. I only get \$160...it costs me at least three times that amount for groceries each month. I cannot rely on food banks because of my disability and limited choices of what I can eat.”

- Justin, Westmoreland County



“I live with my mother. She's retired. My mom was getting \$180 and now she's cut down to \$23. I was getting \$280, I'm cut down to \$27. What can you buy with \$27 and \$23? Nothing. [My mother] had to go back to work just so we could pay bills. We're always worried about if we're going to eat dinner today, tomorrow. I'd never had to come here, never came to a food bank before. Now we have to.”

- Lisa, Allegheny County

1.88 million Pennsylvanians receive SNAP

IMPACT ON THE CHARITABLE FOOD NETWORK

“We’re noticing an incredible influx of new clients. We’re serving 120 to 150 people per day. There’s a sense of desperation that’s heightened... People are panicked. Our guests are now constantly asking for other services, other financial assistance. They’re having a hard time paying rent. One woman who goes to the pantry every week to meet her family’s needs, she told me, ‘Without these services, I wouldn’t survive.’ We’re not getting enough in-kind donations. We’re spending about \$2,000 a week shopping for food. Before, we could shop once or twice a week. Now we’re shopping pretty much every day. The people and pantries need help.”

- Margaux, Founder, Sunday Love Project, Philadelphia, PA

**FOOD BANKS ALONE CANNOT MAKE UP FOR
A BENEFITS LOSS OF THIS MAGNITUDE.
WE CANNOT FOOD BANK OUR WAY OUT OF THIS CRISIS.**



1 IN 5
relied on charitable food in 2020

“What we are seeing that is different is that the majority of people coming to our distributions are seniors. The SNAP cuts and inflation have hurt our seniors the most. The cost of fuel, rent, and food have made the biggest impact. Some of our seniors depend upon the food from the food pantry and CSFP Senior Boxes to survive. The seniors who come are people who are in desperate need. Please don’t forget our elderly in the rural areas. These are citizens who worked hard all their lives but never got paid much and have no pension.”

- Pastor Aucker, New Love Center, Jersey Shore, PA

The loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments has overburdened the charitable food network (food banks, pantries, and congregate meal sites) at a time when we have far less government support, are facing higher food costs, and were already having difficulty meeting existing demand. Strong SNAP benefits are crucial to relieving pressure on the charitable food network.

1 in 5 Americans turned to the charitable food network in 2020 – a 50% increase from before the pandemic. Since then, the demand for food assistance has consistently remained above pre-pandemic numbers. The charitable food network had been able to keep

up with this demand in the past few challenging years largely thanks to federal pandemic aid and the generous support of donors. This is no longer the case. Many federal supports expired and donations slowed, as food inflation soared and the need grew along with it – making it harder for us to procure food and meet the heightened demand. And now, on top of that, we are left struggling to fill the gaping hole the end of SNAP Emergency Allotments has torn in the safety net.

Our community partners are already serving more people and feeling the strain on their operations since SNAP Emergency Allotments ended.

“The SNAP changes really impact people. We have noticed within the past month, more people are coming to the pantry: more families, people that have children, and older adults. During the pandemic, we had a lot of people. Then when jobs started opening, people went back to work so we were not getting that crowd. Now that the extra SNAP benefits have been cut off, we’re noticing some of those people are coming back plus a lot of new people. We are serving these people the best that we can. We have to cut back on what we can give [each of] them so that everyone can get something.”

- Elaine, Food Pantry Volunteer, Willow Grove SDA Church, Willow Grove, PA

ECONOMIC IMPACT

SNAP benefits are one of the fastest and most effective forms of economic stimulus. That means the program not only helps feed people, but also feeds our economy.

SNAP infuses money into local economies. This dramatic loss of funds all at once has a negative ripple effect across our entire economy, with deep impacts on food producers and food retailers. It particularly hurts grocery stores in economically challenged rural and urban areas where SNAP purchases represent a significant share of their business.

SNAP has a multiplier effect. Because each dollar of SNAP generates an estimated \$1.50-\$1.80 in economic activity, the economic impact goes beyond the nearly \$200 million per month in Emergency Allotments that Pennsylvania lost.



“That’s about \$200 million a month that now won’t be available to be spent in Pennsylvania stores, so you can just intuitively imagine the implications of that for retail, let alone the folks who don’t have that money to spend on food. What’s happening now is that retailers are revising their orders accordingly - they’re ordering less. Retailers don’t want to order food that’s just going to sit on the shelves, expiring. Talk about a ripple effect! If you follow that money down to the wholesaler, distributor, processor, producer, farmer - those SNAP dollars go along the length of the food supply chain. The loss of SNAP dollars hurts everyone on the supply chain. It’s shrinking the economy at a precarious time.”

- Michael Howells, Vice President of Association Services
Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association

“It certainly impacts our business, but on a broader level, it impacts our customers, our communities, and the food industry. By the 15th of the month, SNAP recipients are running out of benefits, spending less, or not shopping at all. We didn’t see that with the Emergency Allotments - they had enough dollars to feed their families throughout the month. The first month Emergency Allotments ended, SNAP recipients spent a little more cash, but not nearly half of what they purchased with SNAP dollars. The food they were getting before, they’re not getting now. SNAP is good for business, and more importantly, it helps our communities.”

- Kurt Schertle, Chief Operating Officer
Weis Markets



PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN SNAP

The **Farm Bill** is the centerpiece federal legislation for food and farming. It impacts access to nutritious food for the millions of people in the United States facing hunger. Congress reauthorizes the Farm Bill approximately every five years, and it's up for reauthorization in 2023.

Congress has the opportunity to pass a strong Farm Bill that makes bold investments in critical food assistance programs – including SNAP. When SNAP is cut, the ripple

effect across our communities is devastating. Families and food banks are at a breaking point. Congress must protect and strengthen SNAP in the 2023 Farm Bill.

While there is much room for improvement, SNAP is a vital program with extraordinary strengths. We urge Congress to **protect SNAP** by blocking funding cuts and structural changes that add obstacles to benefits access – such as harsher work requirements.

FARM BILL: SNAP POLICY PRIORITIES

In addition to rejecting any Farm Bill that weakens SNAP, we urge Congress to **strengthen SNAP** by enacting a Farm Bill that will:

IMPROVE BENEFIT ADEQUACY

Congress should increase SNAP benefits to an adequate level. While we celebrate and seek to protect the increase to the Thrifty Food Plan, it is still not sufficient. Basing SNAP benefits on the Low-Cost Food Plan (rather than the current Thrifty Food Plan) would increase SNAP's purchasing power and bring benefit amounts in line with grocery prices and need. Increasing SNAP benefits would also help seniors, people with disabilities, people working low-wage jobs, and others who are most likely to qualify for the minimum benefit. Additionally, Congress should eliminate the cap on the SNAP Excess Shelter Deduction and streamline the SNAP Excess Medical Deduction.

EXPAND SNAP ELIGIBILITY AND STREAMLINE ENROLLMENT

Current eligibility rules and enrollment processes can be complicated, confusing, and restrictive – creating red tape and blocking access among vulnerable populations. Congress should improve SNAP access for seniors, college students, immigrants, and others who do not qualify for or are unable to participate in SNAP due to eligibility barriers. Congress should also simplify application processes and remove administrative barriers to make it easier to apply for or renew benefits.

STRENGTHEN EFFORTS TO SUPPORT WORK

End SNAP's three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). This harsh policy that ceases food assistance after only three months results in increased food insecurity, not increased employment. Congress can better support SNAP participants in finding work by removing the time limit on benefits, as well as improving and adequately funding state employment and training programs. This will help ensure people have the food and opportunities they need to get back on their feet.

SNAP DELIVERS ASSISTANCE quickly and effectively to people recovering from natural disasters or economic crisis.



SNAP REACHES KEY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS – the large majority are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

SNAP REDUCES HUNGER and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.



SNAP IMPROVES DIETARY INTAKE and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.

SNAP IS EFFICIENT, using electronic benefits technology and regular channels of commerce.



SNAP SUPPORTS WORK, helping families struggling with low wages.

SNAP BOLSTERS LOCAL ECONOMIES by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.



SNAP LIFTS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE out of poverty.



**WE CALL ON CONGRESS
TO PASS THE STRONGEST
POSSIBLE 2023 FARM BILL
TO HELP END HUNGER!**

