



SNAP Provides a Critical Lifeline for Iowans

Submitted by: Brian Barks, President & CEO, Food Bank for the Heartland

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an important safety net for low-income Heartland families. It is one of the most effective and efficient programs to help connect our neighbors across Iowa with the food they need to survive and thrive. For every meal provided through Feeding America—the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization—and its partner food banks, SNAP can provide nine. The program also provides a boost to the state economy, bringing federal dollars to local growers, retailers, and communities.

Proposals to restrict access to this vital resource—such as those included within bills introduced by the Iowa House (HF 3) and Senate (SSB 1105)—will harm families, and undermine community, state, and national efforts to address food insecurity.

According to Feeding America, 1 in 14 Iowans—including 1 in 9 children—is facing hunger. At Food Bank for the Heartland, we've seen a steady increase in the numbers of individuals seeking food assistance in western Iowa. With the lingering effects of the pandemic and skyrocketing prices on food and everyday essentials, children, families, seniors, and veterans, are facing a perfect storm of challenges.

During the pandemic, additional temporary government assistance programs were created to help families afford food. Many of those programs have now expired. Meanwhile, inflation has disproportionately impacted low-income Iowans. With thousands of our neighbors now facing impossible choices, we must protect SNAP and its ability to effectively fight hunger in every Iowa community.

There are several longstanding requirements in place to receive SNAP benefits, including income guidelines. These complex requirements can be difficult for applicants to understand and navigate, and the latest bills propose additional unnecessary and harmful requirements that can prevent those in need from even applying for the program. I am particularly concerned with the asset testing language in HF 3 and SSB 1105, which would penalize Iowa households for having even meager savings or more than one vehicle to get to and from work. This requirement would also increase the state's administrative costs and place additional burden on the state's food banks and pantries, which are already struggling to address the growing need across Iowa.

To help protect this vital program and its many benefits, I'm asking for your support in opposing HF 3 and SSB 1105. Please reach out to your elected officials at the state level and ask them to oppose any legislation that attempts to cut SNAP assistance that is needed now, more than ever.

No one in Iowa should face hunger. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most effective anti-hunger program in the United States—and our communities' first line of defense against hunger, providing food benefits that are timely, targeted, and temporary for households in need. Please join me in advocating for SNAP, and our neighbors in need across the Heartland.

About Food Bank for the Heartland

Founded in 1981 and headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, Food Bank for the Heartland—a member of Feeding America—is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a vital focus: to provide nourishment to Heartland neighbors facing food insecurity with respect, integrity, and urgency. Food Bank for the Heartland works with 544 network partners in 93 counties across Nebraska and western Iowa offering multiple hunger relief and nutrition programs. The Food Bank is currently providing, on average, more than two million meals each month. For more information, visit FoodBankHeartland.org.