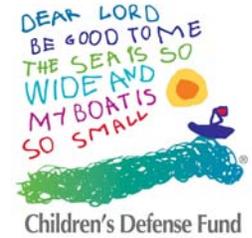


Children's Defense Fund

SNAP Works for Children and for America



June 2011

The Supplemental Food and Nutrition Program (SNAP), formally called Food Stamps, serves children and families by providing targeted assistance to purchase food when they need help most. Since the worst recession in decades began in December 2007, millions of low and middle income parents have lost their jobs and the security of knowing their children would never go to sleep or to school hungry. While these parents work to get their family finances back on track, SNAP has served as a critical support in ensuring their children's daily nutritional needs are met.

Hunger and malnutrition have particularly devastating consequences for children.

- Children's developmental well-being depends on access to adequate nutrition. Hunger has been linked to low birthweight and birth defects, obesity, mental health problems and oral health problems.
- Hunger and malnutrition also result in poor educational outcomes. Data has shown that children who were food insecure in kindergarten saw a 13 percent drop in their reading and math test scores compared to their food-secure peers by the third grade.

SNAP works where and when it's needed most.

- With record numbers of families living in poverty and food prices increasing more rapidly than in decades, SNAP has been a lifeline. Today, one in seven Americans receives SNAP benefits. The overwhelming majority – three quarters – are families with children.
- A typical working mother with two children on SNAP earns on average \$1,027 per month (\$12,324 per year) and receives \$385 per month in SNAP benefits. Without such assistance, her earnings are not sufficient to meet everyday family expenses for food, housing, health and other basic necessities.
- In January 2011, as the economic downturn continued and the unemployment rate was nearly 10 percent, participation in SNAP rose to a record 44,187,831 people – an increase of more than 4.7 million people in just one year.

SNAP is strong economic recovery policy.

- As the economy struggles, getting food stamps and other payments to low-income families is an effective way to stimulate the economy quickly. Families living paycheck to paycheck spend the money almost immediately on basic necessities, pumping dollars right back into the local economy.

- Just one dollar of SNAP benefits creates a “ripple effect” through the economy. Research from the United States Department of Agriculture shows that each \$5 of federal SNAP benefits generates nearly twice that in economic activity.
- In 2009, Congress temporarily increased funding for SNAP by approximately 13 percent – nearly \$20 billion – to meet the needs of families during the recession.

SNAP lifts families out of poverty.

- SNAP lifted 4.6 million Americans above the poverty line in 2009, including 2.1 million children.
- SNAP is also successful at keeping families – particularly those with children – from falling deeper into poverty. A recent analysis found that SNAP has kept more children from falling into extreme poverty (defined as less than half of the poverty line) than another other benefit program. In 2009, SNAP kept 1.1 million children out of extreme poverty.

Converting SNAP into a block grant or capping funding would hurt millions of children and families who are still recovering from the recession and threaten the program’s ability to respond when the American people need help most.

- New proposals for changes in SNAP come on top of cuts recently made to SNAP. Despite evidence of the success of the temporary increase in SNAP funding in 2009 at reaching needy children and families, the “FMAP Act” (the Federal Aviation Administration Bill with amendments) passed in August 2010 reduced SNAP benefits by \$11.9 billion. Additionally, the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act passed in December 2010 will further cut benefits by ending the temporary increase in November 2013.
- The U.S. House of Representatives Budget for Fiscal Year 2012 would convert SNAP into a “block grant” program and cut its funding by \$127 billion – almost 20 percent – in the 2012-2021 period. This would fundamentally change the structure of the program and would result in deep cuts to program funding. Changes would allow states to cap eligibility, create waiting lists, and/or sharply reduce benefits. The impact on children and families who now receive a nutritionally adequate diet from SNAP would be devastating.
- The House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee passed an appropriations bill in May 2011 that would cut spending from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) by more than \$800 million in the next year. This cut would end food assistance for 325,000- 475,000 low-income women and children who are at nutritional risk. Many of these same families also would lose assistance from SNAP.