

SNAP that Supports Health: Perspectives from Participants

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a powerful tool to mitigate hunger, but it should be improved to increase access to nutritious foods and support health.

Families and individuals facing food insecurity across the country experience barriers to enrolling in the program, finding healthy foods in their neighborhoods, and stretching their benefits through the month.

Over the past few years, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), in partnership with state-based organizations, heard directly from SNAP participants about how the program could better support their health.

The 2023 Farm Bill is a key opportunity for Congress to strengthen SNAP so that it better supports participants' desire to purchase more nutritious food.

We urge Congress to continue momentum from the 2008 Farm Bill and invest in innovative SNAP pilots that:

Allow hot and prepared foods to be purchased in retail settings with SNAP:

"Folks on SNAP have lower incomes which in turn means that they typically work longer hours or multiple jobs. Being able to get something on the go would be very helpful, especially with families. I've heard a lot of families say it's rough to have kids being on the go and providing them a good meal."

—CO Student SNAP shopper

"I have a disability that makes me essentially homebound like 95% of the time. I can't drive. The only time that I am able to like get out and about is if someone else will take me. That makes using SNAP benefits really hard. Because it's hard to access them and additionally because I have a fatigue-based condition it's very hard to find the energy to like prepare meals and stuff like that. So I think that it absolutely is very crucial that the benefits, you know, can be used for prepared meals and hot meals."

—CO SNAP shopper

Increase SNAP benefits at different amounts (100%, 150%, and 200% of the federal poverty line) and learn how increasing benefits better supports shoppers' health.

"Well, I guess, me, I'm not much of a healthy eater, but the reason I don't buy a lot of fruits and vegetables is because I really can't afford it."

—IA SNAP Shopper

"Broccoli for example is \$1.99 but the kind that is processed and in a bag is 99 cents and so I'll choose it instead because it's cheaper even if it's not better. Especially if they lower my amount of food stamps."

—NC SNAP Shopper



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Work with stores to offer promotions for nutritious food and to place more healthy options in high traffic parts of the store, like checkout aisles.

“I think [advertising junk food to kids] should be illegal— the same way they found it illegal to market cigarettes to children should be the same as things like candy and sodas and all the things cuz mostly we have a lot of kids in our community who are prediabetic and hypertension and I don’t see why the government doesn’t do something...”

—NC SNAP Shopper

Integrate SNAP Ed into research projects

“I think if I am getting education about how to do these things, I think I would be more likely to actually go through with that. Because it’s not like I don’t know I should be doing these things and I don’t know how to look up a recipe, but if things are readily accessible and in my face, it’s going to increase my chances of doing it, I guess. If I’m more aware.”

—IA SNAP Shopper

Allow participants to enroll in multiple benefit programs at the same time

“The wait time on stuff—the application process alone is tedious. It’s, um, poorly de-signed. Like if you wanna talk about accessibility... It almost feels like they’re trying to trick you into failing the application [process]—they make it so difficult. It almost feels like they do it on purpose, and, like, they don’t want you to get the help that you need.”





—AR SNAP Shopper

Reduce Stigma Around the SNAP Program

“I think if the narrative was shifted from ‘Oh you’re like begging for help’ or like ‘You’ve messed up and now you have to use this’. It needs to change from that to being more like ‘I’m taking advantage of my resources and I’m using what is available to me.’; because like people don’t think that way about financial aid and people don’t think that way about scholarships, so why do they have to feel that way about food?”

—CO Student SNAP shopper

To learn more about CSPI’s Farm Bill Platform visit www.cspinet.org/advocacy/nutrition/nutrition-security-farm-bill.

Follow us on     to hear more about how SNAP could be improved to support health!



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