

SUGGESTED MEETING FORMAT & TALKING POINTS

OPENING:

- Express thanks for taking the time to meet
- Briefly introduce the group (individually, if in a small group) and your organizational and community connections
- Provide brief background about [MAZON](#): who we are, advocacy and programmatic work, priority issues
- Explain purpose of the meeting: to educate about the vital assistance provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in your community; to advocate against harmful proposals in President's budget and for protecting and strengthening SNAP

MEAL PLANNING ACTIVITY:

- Explain the purpose and instructions for the Meal Planning activity. Have the legislator/staff go through the activity together with your group to demonstrate the modest amount of SNAP benefits – on average only \$1.40 per person per meal.
- Take a picture of your legislator/ staff doing the Meal Planning activity with your group.
- Reflect on insights gained from this activity and discuss the questions posed on the back side of the Meal Planning activity.
- Have someone from the group read out loud the quote from Julie to share this personal perspective from someone receiving SNAP benefits.
- Explain that for many households, SNAP benefits run out before the end of the month and family members must turn to food banks or other emergency assistance to put food on the table.

TALKING POINTS TO HIGHLIGHT:

- SNAP has a proven track record to help reduce hunger and poverty, improve health, contribute to educational performance and work productivity, support local economies, promote work, and strengthen our community. SNAP should be strengthened to better enable the purchase of adequate and nutritious food.
- Share your own experiences and perspective and why you support and want to strengthen SNAP. Share a personal story if you have one or a story from your community about the impact of SNAP. Refer to [statistics](#) from your community / state about the rates of food insecurity and the helpful assistance provided by SNAP.
- State the problem: The proposed budget goes very far in the wrong direction and would have a devastating impact on the more than 42 million Americans - including 13.1 million children and 5.7 million seniors - who struggle with hunger.

DISCUSSION:

- Ask the legislator to commit to reject any budget or other legislative proposal that includes harmful cuts or changes to SNAP or other programs that help struggling families afford the basics and make ends meet.
- Wait for a response – be sure to listen and take notes.
- If yes, ask if they would support increasing SNAP benefits, which would allow the program to more fully help individuals and families afford an adequate diet of nutritious food. If there is interest in this, please let MAZON know and we can follow up with information about a legislative proposal to increase the SNAP benefit amount.
- If no, ask for an explanation of his/her position on SNAP. If appropriate, have a respectful discussion to offer a different perspective and reinforce the points about the effectiveness and impact of SNAP and why cuts to the program would hurt millions of Americans and many in your community.
- Please refer to MAZON's leave behind piece on protecting and strengthening SNAP for questions or pushback that might come up in your discussion.
- Offer to be a resource or to send additional information.

WRAP UP:

- Review comments, commitments, and follow-up requests.
- Thank legislator/staff for their time; collect business cards from staff.
- Leave your business card or contact information and advocacy visit folder materials.

DEBRIEF AFTER THE MEETING:

- Meet outside of the building to discuss the visit; help the recorder for your group write down accurate notes.
- Discuss any requests for additional information made by the congressional office; delegate follow-up tasks to the group.
- Post pictures from your meeting on social media to call attention to the meeting and the discussion about protecting SNAP. Tag @MAZONusa in posts and share the picture with MAZON.
- Assign someone to write thank you notes to everyone you met with and to the legislator, briefly restating key talking points; if you met with legislative aides, be sure to mention them in the note to legislator.
- Send Lobby Visit Report Form, notes, pictures, and questions from the meeting to Amanda Neshier, Legislative Assistant, at anesher@mazon.org