

# ENSURE FOOD SECURITY AMONG ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY FAMILIES

For nearly a decade, MAZON has made it a priority to understand, call attention to, and address the unique challenges of military families who struggle with food insecurity. Much of the problem stems from a procedural barrier to assistance — counting a service member's housing allowance as income in determining eligibility for federal nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). It is unconscionable that tens of thousands of service members are shut out of accessing SNAP and other food assistance programs and must quietly turn for help to **food pantries that operate on or near every single military base in the U.S.**

COVID-19 has exacerbated military families' unique financial challenges, such as high spousal unemployment rates, access to affordable childcare, and frequent relocation. With the Defense Department estimating that **24% of military families face food insecurity**, this crisis is a serious threat to mission readiness, troop retention, and future recruitment.

Junior-enlisted service members are more diverse in race, ethnicity, and gender than higher-ranking members who earn higher incomes. They also support families at much higher rates than previous generations of our military. **The Pentagon has not adequately adjusted compensation and benefits to reflect the reality of our modern military force.**

ONLY  
**14%** 

of food insecure military families report getting assistance from federal programs like SNAP or private charities like food pantries

ABOUT **1/3**

of military children at schools run by the Defense Department are eligible for free or reduced-price meals



## The 2023 Farm Bill should:

- ✓ Eliminate the barrier to SNAP for low-income military families struggling with food insecurity by excluding the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as counted income.



Congress must also improve the **Military Family Basic Needs Allowance**

so it reaches more military families in need of temporary, targeted assistance. Congress and the Administration must re-examine military pay levels, acknowledging that the composition and needs of America's military have changed significantly over time.



# A SERVICE MEMBER'S BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING IS NOT COUNTED AS INCOME BY THE IRS AND FOR MOST FEDERAL PROGRAMS — BUT IT COUNTS AS INCOME FOR SNAP ELIGIBILITY.

LESS THAN  
**1%**

of food insecure service members will qualify for the new Military Family Basic Needs Allowance under current law

ABOUT  
**31%**

of enlisted military spouses are food insecure



"I'm doing all I can and serving my country, and I have to worry about how I'm going to buy food? I am not ashamed to say, 'hey I need help' to be able to feed my family. We got WIC when our daughter was a baby, but recently when we applied for food stamps we were denied because our BAH counts as income. The only reason we are even getting by is because our neighbor told us about the food distributions. We're going twice a month and it saves us about \$200 on groceries."

— Gabriel, California

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