ADVOCACY IN ACTION

CHARACTER PACKET

END HUNGER NOW REPRESENTATIVE

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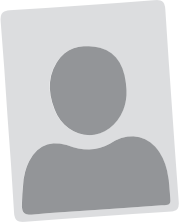
MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger



END HUNGER NOW REPRESENTATIVE

BACKGROUND

You are the senior policy and advocacy staff-member for End Hunger Now, an anti-hunger organization that works with food banks and food pantries, and advocates for state level policies on hunger issues as well producing research around SNAP and food insecurity. You receive a grant from MAZON to support your advocacy work and are working with the MAZON organizer on this bill. If the bill is passed, EHN would be responsible for the administration of the new program.

End Hunger Now recently produced a report on a Market Bucks pilot program that ran for six weeks in three farmer's markets that was successful in encouraging SNAP users to spend more money at farmer's markets, and to spend a higher proportion of their SNAP dollars on produce. You can use this case study when arguing in support of the bill, but the program was run differently than it would be under the proposed legislation (significantly larger voucher amounts in the pilot, and a lot of money spent on very targeted advertising). You can also argue that more SNAP spending is good for business and the economy.

POSITION ON THE BILL

You support the bill in its current form but want it to be as progressive as possible.

- You will push for Amendment 1.
- You do not want Amendment 2 but it is your choice whether that is a deal breaker.
- You cannot support the bill if it contains Amendment 3.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS

- You know Senator A and have met with them before to discuss issues of food insecurity, which they were receptive to.
- You're also friendly with senator B, and you do not have as close a relationship but they respect your organization.
- Senator C thinks you have a liberal bias and probably will not be receptive to what you have to say.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTORS *continued*

- You are working closely with MAZON and with the Rabbi on this bill, and are a known presence in the Jewish community.
- You are also working with Jobs With Justice, though you and MAZON want to focus your energy on meeting with Senators while JWJ wants to hold a protest. You understand it could be effective but are worried about losing your relationship with Senator B (who does not like JWJ), and it is your choice whether or not to agree to attend a protest.
- You have a relationship with the farmers market owner because you are currently working with them to set up an EBT booth at their market.

ADDITIONAL GOALS

- You can try to convince the farmer's market owner that this program will bring them more customers and therefore more money, and you could also try to convince the chamber of commerce that this program won't take business away from grocery stores.
- See if you can get the Senator A to be a champion of the bill. They will be your strongest ally in trying to introduce more progressive amendments into the bill. You should also try to push Senator B towards your side.

STATE OF CALISSOURI SENATE

Eighty-Ninth Session **S.B. No. 47**

TITLE OF BILL:

Healthy Eating, Here at Home

BE IT ENACTED BY LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF CALISSOURI

SECTION 1: BILL DETAILS

SNAP recipients are able to receive dollar for dollar matching vouchers for SNAP benefits they spend at farmers markets, up to $10 per week. There is no cap on the number of vouchers farmers markets may give out.

Farmers market EBT booths will have tokens that SNAP recipients may exchange for EBT dollars.

Farmers markets will keep logs of how many people use the tokens, and will apply for reimbursement at the end of each month. They may also apply for grants to advertise the voucher program and to pay for the extra administrative cost of running the program.

Only people already on SNAP can participate in this program.

The program will be run by End Hunger Now, who will be responsible for administration, outreach, and evaluation.

SECTION 2: FUNDING

The program will receive annual funding of $500,000 from the Calissouri's budget. This funding goes to a non-profit (End Hunger Now), who will run the program. The money may be spent on:

- Directly reimbursing farmers markets for vouchers.
- Advertising/outreach and administration (additional staffing, bookkeeping, etc.) grants.

The money may NOT be spent on:

- Helping farmers markets to set up booths that except EBT cards (credit cards on which SNAP money is loaded).
- Administration of farmers market EBT booths not directly related to the vouchers program.

The funding is guaranteed for two years, after which End Hunger Now and the State legislature will evaluate the program and determine if it is successful and worth continuing to fund.

SECTION 3: POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1: Double the yearly funding, and raise the voucher amount to $25 / week.

Amendment 2: Instead of a set $500,000 yearly sum, pay for the bill through 5% sales tax increase (which is calculated by the Calissouri State Budget Office to yield about the same amount of revenue).

Amendment 3: Reinstate work requirements: Unemployed adults without children may only stay on SNAP for 3 months at a time unless they find work.

SNAP BACKGROUNDER

WHAT IS SNAP?

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP), formerly known food stamps, is a government program that helps low income Americans to purchase healthy food. SNAP recipients receive a monthly stipend loaded onto an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which looks like a credit card and can be used at most grocery stores as well as some convenience stores and farmers markets.

SNAP is a federal program, but it is run by states. It is an entitlement program, meaning that any household that is eligible for the program is entitled to receive benefits, and states are not allowed to turn anybody away because they run out of money. Anybody who meets the eligibility requirements is able to access SNAP.

SNAP participants do not fit one single profile, but many of the people who benefit from SNAP are

- Working part-time or low wage jobs
- Unemployed
- Receiving welfare or other public assistance
- Elderly or disabled
- homeless

The size of the benefit depends on each family's income as well as other factors. In 2016 the average monthly benefit for a family of four was $471, which translates to $1.31 per meal per person. SNAP benefits are meant to supplement, rather than replace families' meal budgets.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements vary by state, but in general households below 130% the federal poverty line ($31,980 per year for a family of four in 2016) are eligible to receive SNAP based on their income. Certain expenses, such as childcare payments and medical expenses, are subtracted when determining income. Households must also pass a resource test, meaning that the value of their eligible assets must be below a certain amount, which in most states is around $2250, or $3250 for households with a disabled or elderly family member. Home lot values, SSI and TANF (cash based government assistance programs) benefits, and most pension plans do not count as eligible assets.

Certain SNAP users must comply with work requirements in order to continue to receive benefits. Childless, able-bodied adults who are able to work receive SNAP for a maximum of 3 months in a 36 month period unless they (1) are working at least 20 hours a week, (2) are at least a half-time student, or (3) are enrolled in a job training program. During the Great Recession, when unemployment was high, many states obtained waivers to get rid of the work requirement. In recent years many of those states are deciding to reinstate work requirements.

EHN MARKET BUCKS PILOT REPORT

Two years ago, End Hunger Now ran a program piloting the use of matching SNAP vouchers at three Calissouri City farmers markets. The goal of the program was to test whether farmers market vouchers could be a successful strategy in increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables purchased with SNAP dollars.

The program ran for six weeks. SNAP recipients could exchange up to $50 dollars per week, getting $100 a week in purchasing power. EHN also ran an aggressive advertising campaign, using radio and newspaper ads, bus and train ads, signs in and around the markets, and outreach to community agencies in order to build knowledge of the existence of the program. They also provided additional staff to meet demand.

As a result, SNAP users came to the farmers markets at a signifcantly higher rate, with the number of EBT transactions per week increasing by 200% while the total amount of SNAP dollars spent increased by 300%. Of the money that was spent, a higher percentage went towards fresh fruits and vegetables than before the pilot began. The effect of the program on non-SNAP sales was not studied, but EHN has no reason to believe that non-SNAP sales were effected in any way. Overall revenue for the farmers' markets increased during this pilot period.

Based on the results of this study, we recommend implementing a voucher program statewide. We also recommend providing funding for outreach and advertising, as well as funds to cover increased staffing and administrative costs for farmers markets.

United States Department of Agriculture

SNAP Supports Work

Most participants who can work, do work

22%

of SNAP participants work full time, are caretakers, or participate in a training program

64%

of SNAP participants are **children**, **elderly** or **disabled**

14%

of SNAP participants are working less than 30 hours/week, are unemployed or are registered for work

ALSO:

About

43%

of all SNAP participants **live in households with earnings**

More than

75%

of households that include a person who is able to work **had a job in the year before or after receiving SNAP**

SNAP — Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SOURCE:

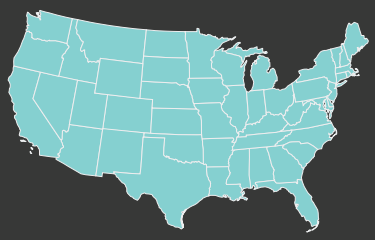
FY14 SNAP Quality Control Data.

Carlson, Steven, Dorothy Rosenbaum, and Brynne Keith-Jennings. "Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016?" Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 2016.

the SNAP impact

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a.k.a. the food stamp program) assists those who need it most

55% of SNAP participants are children or seniors



41% of households have at least one working person

SNAP is an effective, short-term program...and makes economic sense

half of new SNAP participants receive benefits for 10 months or less

and every **$5.00** in SNAP generates **$9.00** in economic activity

Sources: USDA

MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

POLICY FUTURES

Higher SNAP Benefits Mean More Groceries, Better Nutrition

BLOG POST | JUNE 14, 2016 AT 12:00 PM | BY DOTTIE ROSENBAUM

Boosting SNAP (food stamp) benefits raises not only the amount that low-income households spend on groceries but also its nutritional quality, a new study from CBPP's Policy Futures project finds. (Click here for the related policy brief.) It's one of several recent studies showing the potential benefits of increasing benefits, which average only about $1.40 per person per meal.

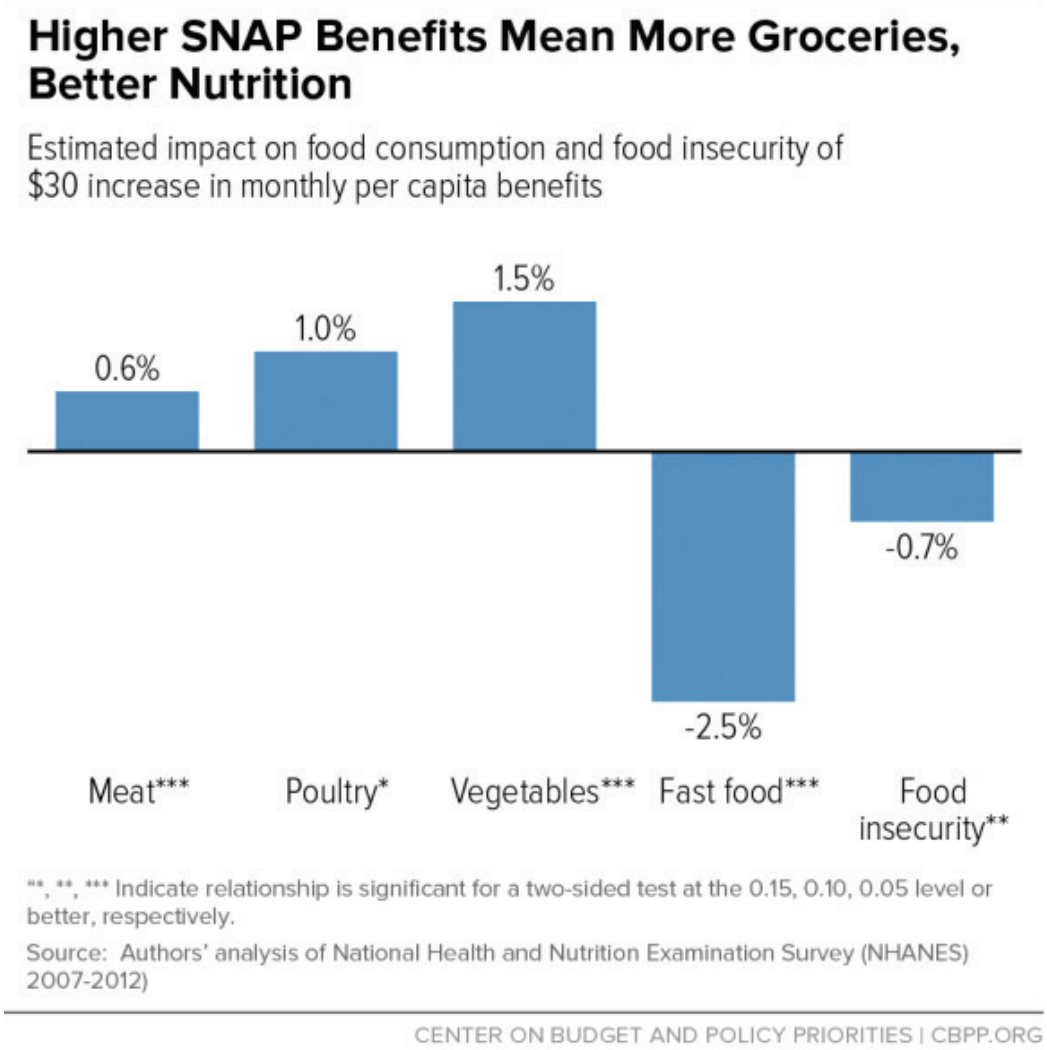
The study's main findings include:

- Low-income families report that to meet their food needs, they would need to spend an additional $4-$9 per person weekly on food. "Food-insecure" families (meaning they had trouble affording adequate food at some point in the past year), who are more likely to be poorer, report needing to spend an additional $12-$20 per person weekly.

- If we gave households an additional $30 per month per person in SNAP benefits (which would be about a 20 percent increase in the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, the basis for SNAP benefits), their food spending would go up by about $19 per person, based on the food spending patterns of households with somewhat more resources. (Food spending would rise by less than the SNAP benefit increase, even though SNAP can be spent only on food, because the added benefits would free up household income for other necessities such as utility bills or non-food groceries that SNAP doesn't cover.)

- That increase in food spending, in turn, would raise consumption of more nutritious foods. Households would consume more tomatoes and vegetables and less fast food, for example (see graph).

- Increased food spending also would lower food insecurity among SNAP recipients.



As the authors note, their finding that households, when given additional resources, spend them on more nutritious foods that may yield better long-term health outcomes is consistent with recent research comparing the long-term outcomes of people in different geographic areas when food stamps gradually expanded nationwide in the 1960s and early 1970s. Children who had access to food stamps in early childhood and whose mothers had access during their pregnancy had better health and educational outcomes as adults than children who didn't have access to food stamps.

TOPICS: Poverty and Inequality, Food Assistance