



## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

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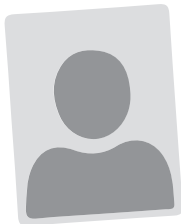
## CHARACTER PACKET

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# RABBI

### INSIDE:

- Character Info/Background
- Legislation Draft: Healthy Eating, Here at Home
- SNAP Backgrounder
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- Bible Verses for Rabbi



**RABBI**



## BACKGROUND

**You lead the largest synagogue in the state.** You are committed to social justice and believe that access to healthy food is a human right, and that Jewish teaching says that societies have a duty to protect their most vulnerable both through individual acts of charity and a social safety net.

Your congregation has run food and clothing drives and organized letter writing campaigns to elected officials about environmental issues. Recently, you've connected with MAZON and have started to talk about issues of food insecurity during your sermons. You and your board have for the last year been planning to start a permanent food collection and distribution program at the synagogue, but you want to divert some of that energy to advocating for this bill.

You will argue for the bill from a policy and economic perspective, but will also use religious / Jewish teachings to argue your message.



## POSITION ON THE BILL

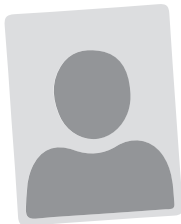
**You are a strong supporter!** You work closely with MAZON so the two of you may choose to make a decision together about whether or not to support the final bill based on what amendments have been accepted.

- You support Amendment 1 but will support the bill either way.
- 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

- Senators A and B were elected with the support of the Jewish community, and while they don't know you personally they know that in some ways you have a lot of influence in the Jewish community. You have no relationship with Senator C.
- You work closely with End Hunger Now and MAZON on this bill.
- You lead the congregation that the Jewish community members attend.



**RABBI**



### **ADDITIONAL GOALS**

- Represent both the Jewish perspective and the Jewish community when meeting with elected officials and anti-hunger advocates. As the face of the Jewish community on this issue, it's your job to make sure everyone you talk to knows that the Jewish community in your state cares about hunger issues, and to make sure you are representing their views accurately.
- Convince the Jewish community that advocacy is the way to effect change and impact lives on a greater scale.



# 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

1 SECTION 1: BILL DETAILS

2

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

6

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

9

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

13

14 Only people already on SNAP can participate in this program.

15

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

18

19

20

21 SECTION 2: FUNDING

22

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

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

29

30 The money may NOT be spent on:

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

35

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

39

40 SECTION 3: POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

41

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

43

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

47

48 *Amendment 3:* Reinstate work requirements: Unemployed adults without children may  
49 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.

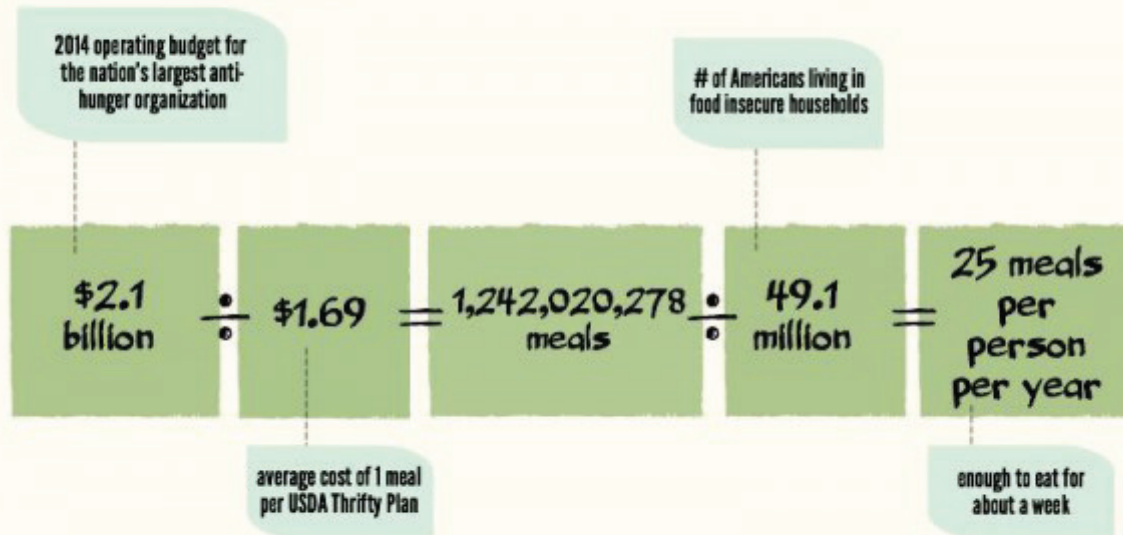
# We will never food bank our way out of hunger

April 15, 2015 | By Josh Protas

**Among the myths about hunger in America frequently repeated is the notion that it is better for local charities to feed people, not the government.** The massive scale of the issue of hunger, the complex factors contributing to this problem, and the response necessary to adequately address it reveal a far different truth: charity alone is not the answer to ending hunger.

Charitable organizations – including MAZON’s nationwide network of partners on the front lines – were not conceived to feed entire communities. Instead, these food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens help to alleviate what were thought to be temporary or emergency situations. The charitable sector provides an important short-term fix but is inherently insufficient to solve the systemic problem of hunger. Many of these agencies are small operations open only a few days a week and for a few hours of each day. They are largely volunteer run, often out of basements or closets at their local houses of worship, and they primarily distribute food that has been donated from within their communities. They simply could never have the capacity to feed the significant and persistent number of people who need help.

# Charity alone is not the answer



**MAZON**

A Jewish Response  
To Hunger

Version: April 2016

The U.S. Department of Agriculture plays a strong and vital role in ensuring that hungry Americans have access to food by administering 15 distinct food and nutrition assistance programs. These federal assistance programs serve as our nation's frontline defense against food insecurity. We cannot food bank our way to an end to hunger, nor do charities have the means to fill the gap left by declining government support. Only the government has the capacity to address an issue with the magnitude of hunger and work toward a solution to this problem.

It is essential that the government nutrition safety net programs are operated with the utmost effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability, and the USDA works diligently to ensure this is the case. Such well-run government programs embody our national commitment to account for the needs and rights of all Americans and our collective responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is proud to stand as a partner in this shared effort to end hunger in the U.S.

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<http://mazon.org/inside-mazon/charity-alone-is-not-the-answer/> (<http://mazon.org/inside-mazon/charity-alone-is-not-the-answer/>)



## BIBLE VERSES

### **Isaiah 58:7-8, 10-11**

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily, your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Eternal shall be your rear guard. If you shall pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the eternal will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

### **Ta'anit 20b**

When Rav Huna would eat a meal, he would open his door and say, "Whoever is in need, let that person come and eat."

### **Midrash Vayikra Rabba 34:14**

Some say that careful inquiry should be made in regard to beggars who ask for clothing, but no inquiries should be made in regard to food. Others say that in regard to clothing also no inquiries should be made.

### **Mishnah Torah 6:6**

If a stranger comes and says, "I am hungry. Please give me food," we are not allowed to check to see if he is honest or not; we must immediately give him food.