

U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture

“Exploring State Options in SNAP”

September 9, 2025

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national organization fighting to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. As a faith-based organization, we take to heart the responsibility to care for the vulnerable in our midst without judgement or precondition. In Deuteronomy, we are commanded: “If there is among you a poor person, one of your kin, in any of your towns within your land which God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against them, but you shall open your hand to them, and lend them sufficient for their needs, whatever they may be.” Founded in 1985, MAZON identifies emerging and persistent hunger needs, then seeks to explore, understand, and develop solutions to these problems.

Since President Trump signed his partisan budget and tax bill into law on July 4, 2025, after a rushed and reckless process in both chambers of Congress, MAZON and others around the country have been working to mitigate the impact that food insecure Americans will experience. This new law is simply a wealth transfer: tax breaks for the rich taken from cuts to essential basic needs programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

We are gravely concerned about the largest budget cuts to SNAP in the program’s history, which will exacerbate food insecurity for the most vulnerable people in the country. For the first time, the federal government will require states to fund a portion of benefit costs. In the first year of implementation alone, the overwhelming majority of states are projected to pay out \$7.5 billion in benefits, and all states will be responsible for at least an additional \$2.5 billion increase in administrative costs as the federal government overburdens them with a new 75% administrative match.

The new law also restricts states in several dangerous ways, such as narrowing their ability to request SNAP time limit waivers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to only areas where the unemployment rate is 10% or greater. This undermines a state’s ability to respond to local labor market conditions and increases barriers to SNAP access for those in economically distressed areas that fall below the 10% threshold. The law also drastically reduces the number of discretionary “Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependent” (ABAWD) waivers states can offer. This is clearly designed to reduce SNAP access for vulnerable adults who may have previously qualified for food assistance under broader, more flexible criteria.

15303 Ventura Blvd
Suite 1100
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
t (310) 442-0020
f (310) 442-0030
mazon.org

1101 14th Street, NW
Suite 930
Washington, DC 20005
t (202) 830-0730
f (202) 830-0649

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* Titles for identification purposes only

^o Past Chair

SNAP is and has always been an anti-hunger program, not a jobs program. We have argued time and again that hunger is not a reasonable nor humane motivator for work, and SNAP has long been one of the most effective government programs at reducing poverty in the United States.

However, Republicans in Congress opted to drastically expand the groups and ages of those who will be subject to SNAP's already onerous work reporting requirements. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the provision in the law to expand these groups alone will cause about 2.4 million food insecure people to lose SNAP — including veterans, former foster youth, people experiencing homelessness, parents with children ages 14-18, and adults ages 54 to 64. Increased hunger is likely to make it harder for these people to look for work, show up reliably, or succeed in training programs.

The law also maliciously eliminated funding for the SNAP Education Program, which helps recipients maximize the value of their SNAP benefits, learn to shop for and prepare healthy meals, and adopt active, healthy lifestyles. We are incredibly troubled by the confluence of these deep cuts with efforts to restrict SNAP retail purchases — both at the state and federal levels — which will ultimately lead to negative health outcomes.

We recognize that poor nutrition leads to poor health outcomes. While those on SNAP constitute a mere fraction of the Americans suffering from diet-related diseases and the epidemics of obesity and diabetes, healthier food is more expensive, and many people already face limited grocery choices. Constraining consumer food choice is not supported by research, and restricting SNAP is inconsistent with the dignity and respect that were cornerstones of the program's creation. Disincentives and restrictions on food choices are not only punitive, but they are immoral and irresponsible. Rather, SNAP benefits must increase to match the reality of the cost of a healthy diet today, allowing people the freedom to make sound nutritional choices instead of selecting items out of a necessity to maximize SNAP's inadequate benefit amounts.

Still, there are several ways that states can take immediate and long-term action to improve the lives of those facing hunger in their communities. Federal policymakers must work directly with state leaders to utilize the options available to increase SNAP participation and use of benefits. All efforts to utilize state options and flexibilities must be in service of enhancing support for those facing hunger.

Many state policymakers will soon be taking action to improve their SNAP "error rate" to avoid the greater financial burden prescribed in the new budget and tax law. Error rates are not measures of fraud, but rather reflections of how

accurately state administrators make eligibility and benefit determinations. Error rates include both underpayments and overpayments. Based on the most recent data, 44 states have an error rate higher than 6% and will therefore be forced to either raise taxes, pull funding from other areas of their budgets, employ additional barriers to eligibility, or potentially withdraw from SNAP entirely. The error rate must be seen as an indicator of when a state requires additional support — not less — to ensure that those facing hunger receive the food assistance they need and deserve.

State policymakers may also leverage programs at the state and local level to support others who are impacted by SNAP cuts. For instance, the new law strips SNAP from legal immigrants such as refugees, asylees, and others with humanitarian status such as survivors of domestic violence and trafficking. Some states may be able to utilize state-funded food assistance programs to make up for the loss of life-saving benefits, and policymakers at all levels of government can help with outreach to immigrant communities to mitigate the “chilling effects” of harmful anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The rushed and reckless “budget reconciliation” process was rife with false information and claims of “waste, fraud, and abuse” when the reality is that SNAP is efficient, cost effective, economically beneficial, and often life-saving. Nonprofit and charitable organizations provide a tremendous service in the short-term, providing temporary food and support, but only the federal government has the capacity to address the scale and scope of hunger in America

Please see the attached quotes from a wide range of religious leaders and heads of faith-based organizations who spoke out earlier this year, urging Congress to protect food assistance and anti-poverty programs.



A Jewish Response To Hunger

Faith Leaders Unite in Call to Protect SNAP and Medicaid

June 10, 2025

As Congress works to finalize the Trump Administration's economic agenda, basic needs programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid are in danger of being slashed by hundreds of billions of dollars. In response, religious leaders and heads of faith-based organizations are speaking out in opposition to cutting these programs which millions of low-income Americans rely on to make life more affordable.

“Ensuring its citizens’ basic needs is both a fundamental government responsibility and a moral imperative,” said **Abby J. Leibman, President & CEO, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger**. “Slashing food support and assistance for millions of Americans not only strikes at the core of American values that have prevailed in this country for almost 100 years, but also flies in the face of thousands of years of our faith’s teachings. It is our obligation to speak out as some of our leaders turn away from historical and moral imperatives, driving millions into poverty, hunger, and sickness in order to provide more wealth to those in the highest income brackets. The strength, simplicity and efficacy of SNAP illustrates how much our government’s basic needs programs reflect our values and priorities. They must be strengthened and celebrated not eviscerated and destroyed. We are a nation built on supporting our neighbors and lifting each other up. Our faith demands that we act like it.”

“Deuteronomy 15:11 teaches us that ‘There will never cease to be needy ones in [our] land, which is why [G-d] commands us: open your

hand to your kin and the needy in your land.’ It is time for this commandment, which has long been a cornerstone of our American system of care, to be reaffirmed by Congress,” said **Reuben D. Rotman, President & CEO, Network of Jewish Human Services Agencies**. “We urge our Congressional leaders to uphold our shared faith values and oppose any cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, core programs that symbolize our national commitment to strengthening the vulnerable among us.”

“The devastating cuts proposed in the federal budget is not just a political debate, but a moral crisis for America that threatens the lives of millions,” said **Sheila Katz, CEO, National Council of Jewish Women**. “Medicaid is a lifeline for 70 million people who rely on it for essential health care, including cancer screenings and prenatal care, while SNAP feeds 14 million children who will go hungry without it. As Jews, we are guided by our sacred value of *pikuach nefesh* — the overriding obligation to save and protect life — a clear and unequivocal responsibility to the sick and hungry. This budget isn’t about fiscal responsibility but about wielding power against our nation’s most vulnerable, directly contradicting our fundamental Jewish obligation to care for those in need.”

“Bread for the World and our supporters are praying that members of Congress protect SNAP from funding cuts and other policies that will increase hunger in the United States,” said **Rev. Eugene Cho, President & CEO, Bread for the World**. “SNAP is our country’s most important anti-hunger program. Each month, 42 million Americans depend on SNAP to help them afford groceries – of which 40 percent are children. Most people use SNAP only for a short time during periods of crisis and increased need. Jesus teaches us to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ not only to show our dependence on the Heavenly Father, but also to recognize that He is the one who cares for people experiencing hunger. We encourage everyone to join us in praying for SNAP.”

“Under the guise of eliminating fraud and waste, lawmakers want to take food off our tables and out of the mouths of poor children by cutting SNAP benefits,” said **Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould, National Political Director, Faith in Action Network**. “I believe that ‘all of God’s children’

are equal and have the right to thrive. The most vulnerable in our families and communities don't deserve to have their grocery lists determined by policymakers who don't value their humanity. Cutting SNAP benefits is not being fiscally responsible — it is morally reprehensible and the deliberate failure to love 'our neighbors as we love ourselves.' Many of these lawmakers claim to be Christian but apparently would be okay responding to the Creator, 'When my neighbors were poor and hungry, I took food off their tables and out of their mouths. By cutting SNAP.'"

"SNAP and Medicaid are among the most proven, cost-effective investments we can make in public health and economic stability," stated **Alesia Frerichs, President and CEO, Lutheran Services in America**. "For decades, they've demonstrated how smart public policy can reduce poverty, prevent medical crises, and uplift entire communities. Gutting these programs doesn't solve any fiscal challenge. It simply shifts the burden onto hospitals, schools, and local safety nets already stretched to their limits. Real innovation means strengthening what works, not dismantling it."

"As Hindus, we are taught that caring for those in need is not charity — it is a sacred duty," said **Sunita Viswanath, Executive Director, Hindus for Human Rights**. "The idea of dāna (generosity), seva (selfless service), and sarvodaya (upliftment of all) lies at the heart of our spiritual tradition. Any attempt to slash life-sustaining programs like SNAP and Medicaid while expanding tax breaks for the wealthy is not only unjust—it is immoral. These policies abandon our collective responsibility to ensure that every person in our society, regardless of income or status, can live with dignity. Hindus for Human Rights stands with the many faith-based voices calling on Congress to protect, not punish, those who are already struggling to survive."

"Thousands of years of Jewish teachings and communal practices reinforce a special obligation to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger — the most vulnerable members of our communities," said **Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism**. "In the face of obscene cuts to lifesaving programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, we must unequivocally "speak up, judge righteously, and champion the poor and the needy" (Proverbs

31:9). The budget is a moral document. I urge Congress to prioritize the basic needs of vulnerable children and families throughout this budget reconciliation process.”

“Throughout our sacred text, it is undoubtedly clear that God has called us to an abundant life,” said **Bishop Julius Trimble, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church**. “Considering this, United Methodists continually affirm that equitable, comprehensive, and quality health care is a basic human right. Draconian cuts to Medicaid at the preference of prioritizing tax cuts for billionaires neglects abundant life. Medicaid is currently available for about 72 million people covering low-income families and seniors in nursing homes. Imposing work requirements that would further restrict access to people who are already struggling to find the care they need neglects abundant life. Budgets balanced on the backs of the poor are an affront to the Gospel.”

“As people of faith, we are called to love our neighbors and help those in need. But this budget reconciliation bill takes from the poor to fund tax cuts for the rich, mass deportation, and the continued militarization of our world,” said **Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation**. “The drastic cuts it will make to SNAP, Medicaid, and critical clean energy investments would wreck families and our economy. No child should go hungry in the wealthiest country in the world. No family should have to choose between healthcare and food while the rich get richer.”

“Programs like SNAP and Medicaid have been invaluable tools for helping millions of American families stay healthy in difficult times,” said **Amy Spitalnick, CEO, Jewish Council for Public Affairs**. “The Jewish community has proudly supported these programs for decades, not just because of our values, but because we know that healthier communities are also stronger and safer communities. The JCPA is deeply opposed to proposed cuts that could leave tens of millions of Americans without vital nutrition and healthcare assistance that they depend on to live.”

“The majority in Congress is proposing a bill that would rob children and families of basic resources for no other reason than to line the pockets

of millionaires,” stated **Maggie Siddiqi, Senior Fellow at the Interfaith Alliance.** “Families should not be denied nutritious meals, access to public schools, basic health care, and more, simply so the ultra-wealthy can pay fewer taxes. I pray Members of Congress will have the courage to stand up for the people they represent, and against the greedy agenda of a select few.”

“The current proposed budget ignores the needs of communities already disenfranchised and marginalized by hunger, poverty, low income, and lack of access to medical care,” said **Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ.** “I urge the Congress to vote against the budget reconciliation bill that jeopardizes our sacred services for children, including the free school meal program and school health care services. Our mission as the United Church of Christ is to build a “Just world for All”. I pray that members of Congress vote in line with these Christian values of generosity, charity, and love, and oppose this and any legislation that would make it harder for families to put food on the table or bring their children to the doctor.”

“Over and over, the Bible tells us that those with the means to do so are responsible for the basic wellbeing of the poor and powerless, whether through the tithe given to the poor or the “corners of the field” or other means,” said **Rabbi Jeremy Schwartz, Treasurer & Executive Committee Member, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.** “And, while we are instructed to “rejoice” in our giving, those gifts aren’t voluntary. Please listen to the divine call and see to it that our neighbors have the basic necessities of life through SNAP, Medicaid, and other benefits.”

“SNAP is a lifeline and a tool of empowerment for many of the communities we serve,” said **Ahmed Shehata of Islamic Relief USA.** “At Islamic Relief USA, it is our goal to keep and strengthen policies that give opportunities and alleviate poverty and hunger at all costs.”

“Children are blessings that help us see Christ’s love for the world. That is why I cannot support Congress cutting assistance that helps children get enough to eat, see a doctor when they are sick, and meet their basic needs, to pay for tax cuts for corporations and billionaires,” said **Rev.**

Michael Neuroth, Director, United Church of Christ Office of Public Policy & Advocacy. “With Mother’s Day just days away, please honor our hardworking mothers by opposing a reconciliation bill that steals from the poor and gives to the rich.”

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, President and CEO, Reconstructing Judaism said, “Where there is no flour, there is no Torah; where there is no Torah, there is no flour (Pirkei Avot 3:17). When people need to scrape to satisfy their basic needs (no flour), they can hardly pursue higher ideals like equity, democracy and justice (no Torah). But we see that the converse is equally true: When higher ideals are trampled – when famine is induced not by nature but by malicious government policy (no Torah) – it is impossible for people to sustain themselves with safety and dignity.”

“The budget resolution prioritizes the interests of the ultra-wealthy at the expense of everyone,” said **Joan F. Neal, Interim Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice.** “Instead of working on behalf of people struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof overhead, the budget resolution bill will enable the wealthy and corporations to secure over \$7 trillion of tax benefits. These will be funded by billions of dollars in cuts to Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other food programs, housing supports, and more, that keep people alive and healthy. This action takes a wrecking ball to the social safety net that helps everyone in this country, mocks the values of our faith, and will have devastating consequences for families, and communities.”

“As a single mother and person of faith, I am disgusted by this generational moral crisis of a significant magnitude that will impact how many babies, children, working parents, families and seniors will be able to survive and thrive right now and for years to come,” stated **Dr. Sabrina E. Dent, Director, Baptist Joint Committee Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation.** “There was a time in my life when I benefited from life-sustaining programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC, and Medicaid, which helped me take care of my child when I couldn’t do it alone as a single parent. It is a humbling experience to apply for these programs at any stage of life. It is an egregious and cowardly act for Congress to even

contemplate a budget that will cut social service programs. Thus, it is our moral obligation to protect children and families along with their dignity by saying NO to these budget cuts.”

“Jewish social justice means taking care of those in our society whose basic needs are not being met,” said **Abby Levine, Executive Director, Jewish Social Justice Roundtable**. “The Torah tells us to leave the corner of the fields for the poor and the stranger, which is the moral foundation for our modern-day system of benefits for all. As a leader of a national network of 64 Jewish social justice organizations, I urge Congress to fully fund life-saving programs like Medicaid and SNAP.”

“SNAP and Medicaid are lifelines for millions of Americans, ensuring access to food and healthcare for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and working families,” said **Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice**. “As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm every person’s inherent worth and dignity and the moral imperative to care for the most vulnerable among us. Cutting these vital programs would deepen suffering, widen inequality, and betray our shared responsibility to one another. To do so is a moral failure. These services not only alleviate poverty and promote health, but they also uphold our values of compassion, justice, and interdependence. We call on Congress to protect SNAP, Medicaid, and other human needs services and to act with moral courage to create a more just and caring society.”

“As a rabbi and a foster parent, I am deeply troubled by proposed cuts to SNAP and Medicaid, which threaten the wellbeing of the youth in my care and our society’s most vulnerable — children, families in poverty, and those already on the brink of crisis,” said **Rabbi Melissa Hoffman**. “Without these lifelines, more families will face unnecessary hardship and the very real risk of being torn apart. The imperative to protect the poor and preserve the dignity of every person is both a Jewish value and a morally universal responsibility — our government must safeguard these essential benefits for the people who need them most.”