

President's Budget Would Slash Nutrition Assistance for Pennsylvanians Living on the Brink

The President's proposed 2018 budget would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) by over **25%** – \$193 billion over 10 years. Such a massive cut would mean working Pennsylvania families, seniors, and people with disabilities would be unable to put food on the table. Specifically, the budget would:

- **Shift up to 25% of the cost of benefits – \$682 million per year – to Pennsylvania.**

Currently the federal government pays 100% of the cost of SNAP benefits. The President's budget would abandon our national commitment to ensuring everyone a basic diet, and force states to contribute toward the cost of those benefits.

 - The state share would increase from 10% in 2020 to 25% in 2023.
 - Pennsylvania's budget already faces a possible \$3 billion shortfall and cannot absorb this huge new cost.
 - \$682 million/year would deplete dollars needed for other critical investments. It is:
 - Greater than PA's spending for community colleges and child care subsidies *combined*
 - More than PA pays for all Department of Aging programs, including senior centers and prescription assistance (PACE)
 - More than twice PA's investment in higher education grants to students
 - Over 10 times PA's support for Drug & Alcohol Programs
 - More than PA's total contribution to Penn State, Pitt, Temple, and Lincoln Universities
 - During a recession, PA taxpayers would have to pay more for SNAP when tax revenues are down. SNAP would lose its role as a key backstop against hard times.
- **Allow states to cut benefits to working families, seniors, and people with disabilities.**

States would be allowed to cut benefits to save money. The average SNAP benefit per person is \$126 per month or \$1.40 per person per meal, which is already inadequate for a healthy diet.
- **Expand the three-month time limit on unemployed adults ages 18-49 to apply even in areas where there aren't enough jobs.**

Currently, SNAP has a three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without minor children who are not working 20 hours a week. But recognizing that there aren't enough jobs for many of these people, Pennsylvania has obtained "waivers" of this rule for 43 counties and 8 cities with high unemployment, ensuring struggling Pennsylvanians continue to qualify for SNAP. In counties



where the time limit is not waived, nearly 20,000 individuals have lost access to SNAP after using their allowable three months of benefits.

- States would be prohibited from protecting people in high unemployment areas unless the unemployment rate was over 10%.
- A 10% unemployment rate is a very high standard that would almost never be met. Currently Potter County has an unemployment rate of 7.7%. Philadelphia's is 6%.
- As a result, struggling people with barriers to employment, such as opioid addiction or criminal records, would be subject to the three-month time limit on nutrition assistance.
- People trying their hardest to find a job would still lose their SNAP, since job search does not count. States need not offer a way for people to work to keep their SNAP.

- **Reinstate the SNAP asset test and a “benefits cliff” for working families.**

States would no longer have options to eliminate the SNAP asset limit or increase the gross income limit for SNAP, both of which Pennsylvania has done.

- Asset tests discourage savings and create red tape that can delay SNAP benefits for those who are eligible.
- Reducing the income limit would reinstate a “benefits cliff.” Families that earn just a little more could lose all their SNAP and be worse off. With PA's current higher income limit, working families' benefits are gradually reduced as their pay increases until they no longer qualify.
- A reinstated “benefits cliff” could discourage workers from seeking raises or better jobs.

- **Penalize larger families.**

SNAP benefits would be capped at a household size of 6, denying larger families sufficient benefits to feed everyone. A household with 8 people – 2 grandparents, 2 parents, and 4 children – would receive the same amount as a family of 6 with the same income and expenses, essentially cutting off benefits to 175,000 people in 80,000 larger households nationwide.

- **Eliminate the minimum benefit.**

Currently 75,000 Pennsylvanians receive the minimum SNAP benefit of \$16 for a one- or two-person household. The vast majority of these individuals are seniors or have disabilities and would all lose their SNAP under the President's budget.

- **End targeted utility assistance for SNAP households struggling to pay high heating bills.**

- **Create additional fees for retailers to participate in SNAP.**

Retailers already pay for equipment needed to process SNAP benefits. Added costs will likely drive small retailers in underserved communities out of the program and expand “food deserts.”

