

Ending Hunger in PA

CheckList

Congress has ended extra pandemic-related SNAP benefits. Beginning in March, Pennsylvania will receive \$200 million less in food assistance benefits each month, impacting the lives of 1.9 million Pennsylvanians. Every household that receives SNAP will lose at least \$95 in benefits per month. These recommendations are aimed at helping address the impending hunger cliff by increasing participation in federal programs and strengthening existing programs to meet increased needs created by this major loss of federal investment.

Get food into the hands of senior

Senior Food Box Program (SFBP).

 \$500,000

Thousands of seniors in Pennsylvania struggle with choosing between medications, food, and other life-sustaining cost. Obtaining state funding to support the Senior Food Box Program to assist lead agencies with costs incurred in recruiting and ultimately providing service to more seniors in PA would make incredible impact.


Transportation a Barrier.

 \$500,000

Prior to the pandemic seniors were finding it harder and harder to find transportation or a proxy to pick up their monthly food box. Recent support initiatives and partnerships such as Door Dash played a critical role in getting the food box to the senior's front door. In 2022 over 50,000 deliveries were made as an in-kind donation unfortunately that business model is no longer substantiable by Door Dash and other delivery carriers.

Acquire healthier foods for our communities

PA Agricultural Surplus System (PASS).

 \$5,000,000

PASS provides an efficient mechanism for Pennsylvania's agricultural industry to donate safe, wholesome food products while being reimbursed for the costs involved in harvesting, processing, packaging, and transporting these foods. Without PASS, these food products would likely otherwise be left to rot in the field, be plowed under, be dumped, or be landfilled. Some of these products include apples, asparagus, broccoli, butter, cabbage, cheese, chicken, corn, eggs, green beans, ground beef, lettuce, milk, pears, potatoes, squash, and tomatoes.

Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI).

Currently funded through DCED, the PA Fresh Food Financing Initiative provides **one-time grants and loans for the development** or expansion of healthy food retail such as grocery stores, farmers markets, and co-ops in LMI and under-resourced urban and rural areas across the state. The presence of these food retail outlets improves access to healthy food and supports venues for important affordability benefits such as SNAP and WIC. FFFI also creates and retains jobs while boosting local economies and stimulating additional investment.

Support charitable food networks

State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).

 \$26,000,000

Demand for food assistance remains above pre-pandemic levels, and new challenges continue to put a strain on food banks' operations. Higher fuel prices and inflationary costs are cutting into the limited resources food banks must operate. The rising cost of food is a significant hardship not only for families, but services like this that want to ensure everyone who needs a meal can get one.

Protect and Strengthen SNAP

Help connect your constituents to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Share information about SNAP with your constituents, especially older adults. Research shows that older adults who receive SNAP benefits have better nutrition and lower health care costs than those who are eligible but do not receive SNAP benefits with an average savings of \$2,120 per person annually. Elected officials can educate and encourage older constituents to access SNAP, including assisting seniors on a fixed income with a simple two-page application (ESAP), and encouraging DHS to reach out to seniors receiving Medical Assistance but not SNAP.

Help low-income seniors get SNAP. Increasing the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and people with disabilities. Several states bolster SNAP for older adults and people with disabilities by providing for additional benefits. An increase to the minimum benefit would increase food security and good nutrition for older adults. The federal minimum benefit is currently \$23 per month, and we suggest raising that to \$40 per month.

Ensure PA Children Get the Nutritious Meals They Need

Women Infants & Children Program. With the decline in participation for the WIC program over the last several years, Thriving PA recommends:

- **Improving WIC technology** to remove barriers to access and meet families where they are – including developing an online Smart Card and mobile app, permanently implementing telehealth policies, investing in WIC online chasing, and establishing a technology and innovation workgroup
- **Integrating WIC into the portfolio of services available** to low-income families and promoting connections among key programs, including health care, early childhood education, SNAP, and Medicaid

Food Bucks. Supporting healthy eating by investing in nutrition incentives programs such as Food Bucks. SNAP benefits average about \$2 per person per meal, and Food Bucks allow SNAP recipients to earn Food Bucks - stretching those dollars - when they purchase fruits and vegetables. **With an investment by the Commonwealth, PA could draw down additional federal dollars from the GusNIP program**—this would better meet the demand by PA families and boost revenue for many farmers and small businesses.

School Meals. High costs are hurting families, with many struggling to afford the food their kids need. Schools want to provide kids nutritious school meals but face higher food and overhead costs; labor shortages; supply chain issues; and a dramatic increase in school meal debt. Schools work hard to support their communities and should not be forced into the inappropriate role of being bill collectors. With thousands of PA children being food insecure despite their families being over the income limit for school meals and temporary increases to meal reimbursements ending soon (June 30), PA must:

- **Increase the state supplement** for school meals to address rising cost of food, labor, and transportation and improve meal quality.
- **Provide access to free school meals for all students** to support health and learning and address school meal debt

Pennsylvania Hunger Action Coalition Membership

Allies for Children-Benefits Data Trust-Bucks County Opportunity Council-Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition-Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy-Center for Hunger-Free Communities-Central PA Food Bank-Chester County Community Foundation-Child Hunger Outreach Partners-Coalition for Low Income Pennsylvanians-Community Action Agency of Delaware County-Community Action Association of PA-Community Legal Services of Philadelphia-Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission-Family & Community Services of Delaware County-Family Health Council-Fayette County Community Action Agency-Feeding PA-Food Helpers-FRAC-Franklin County-Gateway Health Plan-Great Valley School District-Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank-Health Care Decisions-Healthy Blair County Coalition-Helping Harvest-Hillman Family Foundation-Housing Alliance of PA-Hunger-Free PA-Indiana County Community Action Program-Jewish Health Foundation-Just Harvest-Lebanon Valley College-Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA-Manna on Main-Mechanicsburg Area School District-Milk4U-National Association of Social Workers-North Penn School District-PA Association County Human Services Administration-PA Budget & Policy Center-PA Catholic Conference-PA Council of Churches-PA Food Merchants Association-PA Health Funders Collaborative-PA Jewish Council-PA Nutrition Education Network-PA Partnership-PA State Council of Farm Organizations-PA State Educators Association-Partnership for Better Health-People's Energy-Philabundance-Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger-Philadelphia Department of Health-Philadelphia Office of Children & Families-Philadelphia School District-Phoenixville Area Community Services-Phoenixville Community Health Foundation-Pittsburgh Policy Council-Pottstown Foundation-Project Share-Public Health Management Corporation-School Nutrition Association of PA-Share Food Program-Share Our Strength-South Central Community Action Programs-The Food Trust-The Foundation of Delaware County-The Learning Lamp-The Leo & Peggy Pierce Family Foundation-The Shippensburg Community Resource Coalition-United Way of PA-University of PA School of Arts & Science-Westmoreland Food Bank-YMCA-York County Food Bank