MOAA
Military Officers Association of America

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# Congress: Provide a Basic Needs Allowance for Military Families Facing Food Insecurity

### What Is the Basic Needs Allowance?

The proposed Basic Needs Allowance would give an estimated $400 monthly subsidy to servicemembers with a household gross income (not including the Basic Allowance for Housing, or BAH) at or below 130% of the poverty line. The subsidy is meant to ensure no military family faces food insecurity. It would be accompanied by financial education resources.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates around **10,200 servicemembers would benefit from the monthly allowance**. The program would cost $175 million from 2021 through 2024, according to CBO projections — a little less than $44 million per fiscal year.

Servicemembers would not rely on this program for extended periods of time. Instead, it would provide much-needed temporary assistance during times of financial difficulty, mostly among junior enlisted.

This program also will alleviate the need for servicemembers to participate in the government-sponsored Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), thus reducing mandatory spending in this area and making the overall program cost minimal when compared to the DoD budget.

### Why Is It Needed?

Many military families facing food insecurity do not qualify for SNAP because BAH is included in the program's calculation of gross income. This barrier to SNAP participation has led to thousands of military families seeking assistance from food pantries, many operating on or near military installations. The Armed Services YMCA, one of the top food pantry providers at military installations, reports a 400% increase in demand for assistance during the pandemic. The mental and physical impacts of food insecurity directly impact a servicemember's ability to do their job, compromising military readiness.

Additionally, DoD has spent billions of dollars looking into obesity in the military, increasing the recruitment pool, and Total Force Fitness. Food insecurity plays a part in all of these; addressing it with a wider approach will create positive change for mental and physical health, and could potentially save dollars spent addressing these issues.

To learn more about SNAP participation among servicemembers and MOAA's concerns with the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation report on this topic, visit **MOAA.org/foodinsecurity.**

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## You Can Help: Cosponsor H.R. 2339

- We are seeking bipartisan support for our military families facing food insecurity. Your cosponsorship of this legislation will help us secure this bill in the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.
- **Support for military families.** Will you join us and the coalition of more than 35 military and veterans service organizations committed to passing this legislation?
- **These organizations endorse this legislation and represent millions of Americans:** The Military Coalition, MAZON, Blue Star Families, The White Oak Collaborative, and other partners.



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