

HF 2438 would take SNAP away from parents, increase children's risk of food insecurity and make it difficult for struggling families to learn, work and thrive

SNAP, called Food Assistance in Iowa, helps people put food on the table and get back on their feet after tough times. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to eligible individuals and households. SNAP plays a central role in fighting hunger. In fall 2021, 26% of Iowa households with children reported that the children sometimes or often were not eating enough because the household could not afford enough food.¹

There is little evidence requiring custodial parents to cooperate with child support recovery yields extra income for children — even as it puts their nutrition at risk.

HF 2438 would impose new, burdensome eligibility verification requirements, including requiring custodial parents to cooperate with child support recovery. Here are the main problems with that approach:

- **The bill is pricey.** The Legislative Services Agency estimates the Iowa Department of Human Services will need to add 43 full-time employees by FY 24 to administer the bill's provisions at an annual cost of over \$1.3 million to the state (and a total annual cost of \$2.57 million, including the portion covered by federal dollars).²
- **Taking SNAP benefits away from parents puts children at increased risk of food insecurity.** When parents lose food assistance for non-cooperation, both parents and children stand to get hurt. If a custodial parent is subject to a mandate and fails to cooperate, sanctioning their SNAP benefits reduces the family's overall food budget and puts children at increased risk of inadequate nutrition.
- **Child support cooperation requirements threaten the safety and well-being of children.** There are many reasons why parents and guardians do not open formal support cases through the Child Support program, including personal safety, and the policy could put families who have experienced domestic violence at risk.
- **There is little evidence to suggest the policy would work.** For example, North Carolina, which implemented a similar pilot program mandating that families who receive child care assistance cooperate with child support recovery, found it to be highly inefficient. It cost \$2 million to implement, but only led to a total of about \$7,000 in child support payments to 12 families over a year, or only about \$50 a month.³

¹ Population Reference Bureau Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, 2020-2021, accessed at the Kids Count Data Center, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

² Iowa Legislative Services Agency, HF 2438 Fiscal Note, 23 Feb. 2022 accessed at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FN/1287572.pdf>

³ North Carolina Department of Human Services, "Child Care Subsidy Recipients to Cooperate with Child Support Services/Demonstration Project." 1 March 2019. Accessed at https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/SL_2017-57_Section_11B_7_a_Child_Care_Subsidy_Cooperation_Final.pdf?ver=2019-03-26-161758-447