



It's time for Congress to put people first
Next coronavirus relief bill must include SNAP

Increasing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, during an economic downturn is the best, most direct way to ensure lowans have the food they need and to stimulate local economies. While federal Covid relief laws enacted so far have provided significant help to many Iowa households in need, tough times are not over. Thousands are still laid off or furloughed, and new spikes in Covid cases are likely to slow the business reopenings. And thousands of lowans — especially poor households, Black and brown people, and immigrants — have received little, if any, help at all. Congress is right now negotiating what leaders say will be the last coronavirus relief bill before the end of the year. Members should act now to make sure those hard-hit by the crisis get the help they need.

Congress should raise the SNAP maximum benefit by 15 percent until jobs return and the economy recovers.

- **This change is modest — about \$25 more per person per month — but will do a lot to address hunger and food insecurity**, which are increasing at alarming rates due to the pandemic and recession. A recent study found that by the end of April, more than 1 in 5 U.S. households were food insecure, nearly double the rate in 2018.
- Even as parents try to shield their children from hunger by stretching dollars and skipping meals, **food insecurity is directly affecting young children to an unprecedented extent**. Among mothers with young children, nearly one-fifth said their children are not getting enough to eat during the pandemic. This is three times as high as during the worst of the Great Recession. Such deprivation has long-term impact because we know access to food boosts healthy development, school success and lifetime earnings.
- At the same time families are facing layoffs and furloughs, food costs are rising across the country due to the pandemic — adding further pressure on households struggling to put food on the table. By **strengthening SNAP, we relieve pressure on Iowa schools, faith communities, and food pantries** on the front lines of hunger relief during COVID-19.
- Because SNAP households have very tight budgets, they tend to spend any additional resources they receive, which is why both Moody's Analytics and CBO have said that, among possible policy responses to a recession, **increasing SNAP benefits has one of the biggest "bangs for the buck" in terms of shoring up the economy**. In May 2020 alone, SNAP pumped more than \$58 million dollars into Iowa businesses. Boosting SNAP will be a life saver, especially in parts of rural Iowa where retailers were struggling to keep the doors open even in better times.

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