



2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: *Making an Impact in Florida*

Closing the Meal Gap Act

Will boost Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for all participants and make further improvements. SNAP benefit adequacy will be improved by replacing the Thrifty Food Plan with the more appropriate Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for SNAP allotments; eliminating the cap on the SNAP Excess Shelter Deduction; and streamlining SNAP Standard Excess Medical Deductions for persons who are older or have disabilities (with a minimum standard of \$140).

Impact on Florida → Florida Impact facilitated a Community Engagement Project last year centered around SNAP and its benefits for the community. The senior citizens who participated in this let us know that they were only getting \$19 a month in SNAP benefits. For people on a fixed income of social security this puts them in a monthly position of deciding whether to buy food or pay their rent and buy medicine.

Improving Access to Nutrition Act

The bill would end harsh and arbitrary time limits on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for certain individuals and allow them to access the food, nutrition, and overall health benefits provided by the program.

Impact on Florida → Although there has been a decrease in unemployment, Florida's unemployment rate is still at 2.7%. Floridians who are unemployed or underemployed do not qualify for the benefits provided through SNAP. The current work requirements for SNAP don't consider the rising cost of childcare which means parents have to stay home to take care of their children or disabilities that prevent Head of Households from working over 20 hours a week. With the rising cost of housing, food and childcare, families are falling deeper into debt and ultimately poverty. Passing this bill would reduce the risk of increased poverty rates in the state.

Enhanced Access to SNAP Act

Would put college students with lower incomes on an equal footing with other people in qualifying for SNAP. SNAP would no longer condition eligibility for most people attending college at least half time on performing work study, or 20 hours or more per week of outside employment.

Impact on Florida → according to school reporting, on average 40% of students at Miami Dade College, 47% of students at Florida Atlantic University, 29% of students at University of South Florida and more than 20% of students at the University of Florida struggle with hunger and food insecurity.

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SNAP Plus Act

Would permanently end the prohibition on use of SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods from food retailers. The proposed change would afford SNAP customers broader choices available to other food shoppers.

Impact on Florida → The homeless population of 21,141 persons could really benefit from access to hot meals. During the pandemic OCPS piloted a program to serve our homeless students. For the students displaced at Extended stay hotels, bringing them food that needed heating in the oven was useless to them because most of the hotels are not equipped with stoves. This brought to light the issue of SNAP not offering hot meals, because of this restriction some of our students never get to eat a hot meal outside of school.

Lift the Bar Act

Seeks to restore access to public programs for lawfully present immigrants by removing the five-year waiting period and other restrictions to SNAP eligibility. The proposal also would remove that waiting period in Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.

Impact on Florida → immigrants make up for more than a quarter of Florida's labor force. With the rising costs of food and housing immigrant families are struggling to feed themselves. By lifting the bar these families can get much-needed access to food and health care.

School Meals Expansion Act

The School Meals Expansion Act would lower the eligibility threshold from 40 percent to 25 percent and increase the multiplier for federal reimbursement from 1.6 to 2.5.

Impact on Florida → A study by Johns Hopkins University found that students attending Maryland schools with CEP were nearly 3 times less likely to be food insecure, as compared to students attending a comparison district school – even after adjusting for race/ethnicity and education level of the adult. The study also found improved attendance rates in elementary and middle schools, improved grade 10 promotion rates, and higher school lunch participation rates in CEP schools. CEP often increases the number of kids who eat school breakfast and lunch each day which generates additional revenue for the school nutrition budget and allows for cost-saving bulk purchasing of meal ingredients/components. School Food Service staff in Hillsborough County, Florida noted that after adopting CEP for 174 schools, they were able to feed more kids than they fed before the pandemic. This means that the need for free school meals is there.

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