

FY18 Federal Budget: Nutrition Assistance and Latinos

Everyone should have access to affordable, nutritious food. However, one in eight American households, including one in five Latino households, does not.¹ The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation's largest federal nutrition assistance program, helps families fill these gaps, while providing economic security for millions of families. The following provides a brief overview of SNAP and highlights key facts on the program's impact on Latino children and families.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is a federal program that provides hardworking, low-income people and families with monthly benefits to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other commercial retailers. SNAP follows the Thrifty Food Plan, which covers the bare-minimum level of food necessary to provide adequate nutrition.² On average, a SNAP household receives \$258 per month, which works out to about \$1.40 per meal per person. Benefits are based on a sliding scale, which varies depending on income and household size.³

Who Benefits from SNAP?

In 2015, SNAP helped 22.5 million households put food on the table. Of all SNAP households, 16.7 million (75%) included a child, an elderly person, or someone who is disabled.⁴ In 2015, SNAP reached an estimated 10 million Latinos.⁵ As a result, SNAP lifted 1.2 million Latinos out of poverty and 1.5 million Latinos out of deep poverty.⁶ Further, SNAP recipients who are able to work, do work, as a significant share of SNAP households report income and earnings.⁷ SNAP also stimulates national economic growth, as every dollar spent on the program yields \$1.79 of positive economic activity.⁸

What About the Federal Budget?

President Trump's FY18 budget request cuts \$193 billion from SNAP and changes the program to a block grant, limiting the amount of funding available for state SNAP programs, undermining the program's ability to reach those in need.⁹ Millions of hardworking families and their children, including Latinos, depend on SNAP to buffer against hunger and poverty when times are tough. The budget reconciliation process could be used to undermine the SNAP program by turning it into a block grant, undermining the program's ability to serve people in need and

expanding, if necessary, when times are tough. Further, any reductions in spending for SNAP would be used to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations. Maintaining and strengthening this critical program is essential to their health and economic security.

¹ Alisha Coleman-Jensen et al., *Household Food Security in the United States in 2015* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016), https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/79761/err215_summary.pdf?v=42636.

² James Ziliak, *Modernizing SNAP Benefits* (Washington, DC: The Hamilton Project, 2016), http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/ziliak_modernizing_snap_benefits.pdf.

³ Kelsey Gray, Sarah Fisher and Sarah Lauffer, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015* (Alexandria, VA: Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2015.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *SNAP Helps Millions of Latinos* (Washington, DC: CBPP, 2017), <http://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-helps-millions-of-latinos>.

⁶ National Council of La Raza, *Fiscal Year 2018 Federal Budget: A Preliminary Assessment of the President's Request* (Washington, DC: NCLR, 2017), http://publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1724/nclr_budgetassessment.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y; and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *SNAP Helps Millions of Latinos*.

⁷ Kelsey Gray, Sarah Fisher and Sarah Lauffer, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households*.

⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic Linkages: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Linkages with the General Economy* (Washington, DC: USDA, 2016), <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/>.

⁹ Ibid.