

# SNAP Benefit Increase Information

As the Senate goes back in session and you consider additional measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, **Fill the Table** urges you to boost and protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to address rising food insecurity and unprecedented demand at area food banks. Specifically, we ask you to increase the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent and increase the minimum monthly benefit to \$30 throughout the duration of this crisis, as well as suspend administrative rules with the potential to weaken program eligibility.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Hamilton Project* reported that, according to US Census Bureau data, about 14 million children are not getting enough to eat in the United States.

SNAP is the largest and most effective nutrition program in the country, serving as our nation's first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity. According to the latest Census data, SNAP lifted 3.4 million individuals out of poverty in 2017, including 1.5 million children. A majority of SNAP participants, nearly 70 percent, are families with children and research also demonstrates 74 percent of adult SNAP participants are working or have worked within a year of SNAP participation. Though benefits average approximately \$1.40 per person per meal, recent studies suggest every \$1 of SNAP benefits during an economic downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity.

Increasing SNAP benefits is a proven effective way to address hunger and pump money back into the economy, particularly during an economic downturn. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, after Congress increased SNAP benefits in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, the prevalence of food insecurity fell by 2.2 percentage points among low-income households and the prevalence of very low food security fell by 2.0 percentage points. The ARRA boost also helped increase food expenditures by 5.4 percent among low-income households.

Overwhelmed food banks and emergency food providers across the country are racing to fill the immediate need, but they cannot match the reach of SNAP. According to Feeding America "for every one meal that the nation's network of food banks provides, SNAP provides nine." With so many American impacted by this crisis, it is critical that Congress work to provide a sustainable safety net that ensures a basic level of nutritional support for those struggling in our communities.