

DURHAM BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Resolution

A JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING SNAP AND OTHER FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

- WHEREAS,** the USDA is proposing a rule change to close and limit the SNAP automatic eligibility by restricting broad based “categorical eligibility” that states have implemented to reduce food insecurity within the United States. The proposed rule change would impact eligibility to over 3 million Americans who represent the working poor, disabled, seniors, families, and children. In addition, this rule change would create an added workload to Social Service departments and impact the USDA school lunch program by reducing eligible children who rely on the school lunch program to receive a balanced and nutritious meal; and
- WHEREAS,** North Carolina is the 8th hungriest state in the nation¹. While average monthly SNAP benefits are nominal, about \$131 per household, the program is vital to helping people access nutritious food²; and Durham County is the fourth most expensive county to live in North Carolina and is only growing more expensive³. With 32,787 residents of Durham County relying on SNAP benefits to help pay for their groceries, food insecurity still persists with a rate of 17.9%^{4,5}. According to the 2016 Durham County Health Assessment Survey, 15.8% of residents reported they cut the size of or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food⁶; and
- WHEREAS,** SNAP helps those most vulnerable. In Durham County, SNAP benefits are provided predominantly to households with children, seniors, or people with disabilities². About half of those receiving SNAP benefits are employed²; and
- WHEREAS,** SNAP participation is shown to improve nutrition and promote positive long-term health outcomes. Participation for six months can increase food security in a household by up to 10%⁷. Furthermore, individuals who had access to food stamps in early childhood have a lower risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes as adults^{8,9}. Additionally, access to SNAP is associated with increased utilization of preventative care, which can contribute to lower overall healthcare costs¹⁰. A national level study found that SNAP participation was associated with a \$1400 reduction, per household, in yearly healthcare expenditures¹⁰; and
- WHEREAS,** SNAP improves the state’s economy. In 2016, SNAP benefits contributed \$2.2 billion to North Carolina’s economy¹¹. These economic benefits were especially impactful in the agricultural and retail sectors. In Durham County, innovative programs such as Farmer’s Market Double Bucks program allow SNAP participants to access nutrition and improve the local economy; over \$55,000 of SNAP/Double Bucks was spent on nutritious foods at Durham Farmers’ Market since its inception in 2014¹². Research from Moody’s Analytics show that for every dollar spent on SNAP, \$1.70 is put back into the U.S. economy¹³. Furthermore, each year from 2009-2012, SNAP benefits helped keep 338,000 North Carolinians out of poverty, including 150,000 children¹¹. SNAP dollars encourage economic growth by supporting grocers, paying workers, and increasing the purchase of goods. SNAP allows families to participate in their local economies and helps to make our communities stronger; and
- WHEREAS,** SNAP is effective and efficient. SNAP’s entitlement structure allows the program to expand in times of greater need, such as the 2008 recession, and contract in times of economic prosperity. Furthermore, every penny of monthly SNAP benefits for North Carolinians comes from the federal government, and the state of North Carolina is only responsible for half of the administrative costs of the program. The SNAP program therefore brings in billions of dollars of economic activity for North Carolina. SNAP also has one of the most rigorous quality control systems of any public benefit program, which results in lower frequency of fraud or abuse, and an error rate of just 2%¹⁴; and
- WHEREAS,** food insecurity remains an issue for families and seniors receiving SNAP benefits, especially towards the end of the month; and
- WHEREAS,** 59.8% of children receive the National School Lunch program which allows students to receive a healthy and substantial meal to enhance learning and education. The USDA school lunch program is connected to SNAP eligibility which will increase food insecurity for families that lose benefits through loss of categorical eligibility, impacting children’s education and wellbeing; and
- WHEREAS,** broad based categorical eligibility allows for connectivity of SNAP benefits to other public assistance programs which creates a streamlined process in determining eligibility for Social Service departments by not requiring excessive verifications of incomes and assets which create additional workloads for employees determining benefits.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Durham County Board of Commissioners that the USDA reject the propose rule change to revise categorical eligibility (FNS-2018-0037) to that will reduce SNAP beneficiaries by as many as 3.1 million low income/working households as well as 30,000 North Carolina residents, including many seniors, children, and families. Such a revision of this rule would create potential food insecurities for millions of individuals, families, disabled persons, and seniors that communities are not equipped to face. In addition, the revision of categorical eligibility will create undue hardships on local and state Social Service agencies charged with determining eligibility for SNAP by creating extra verifications and resource tests that will add to already stressed workloads to a burdensome process for applicants and staff.

The 12th day of August, 2019.

1. Kennedy, Brian. Factsheet: Hunger in North Carolina. NC justice Center. November 2016.
2. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. North Carolina: Food and Nutrition Services. March 14, 2018.
3. <http://www.dconc.gov/home/showdocument?id=1351>
4. Email correspondence with Pinky Davis Boyd, Durham Food and Nutrition Services Application Manager. August 21, 2017.
5. Feeding America. (2015). *Food Insecurity in North Carolina*. [Interactive map]. Available from <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2015/overall/north-carolina> Accessed March 8, 2018
6. Durham County Department of Public Health & Partnership for a Healthy Durham. 2016 Community Health Assessment Survey. <http://healthydurham.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Durham-County-2016-Community-Health-Assessment-Survey-results-1.pdf> Accessed March 8, 2018.
7. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support. Measuring the Effects of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Insecurity. August 2013.
8. Nguyen BT, Shuval K. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Food Insecurity, Dietary Quality and Obesity Among US Adults. *American Journal of Public Health*. July 2015
9. Carlson, Steven. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP Works for American’s Children. September 29, 2016.
10. Berkowitz SA, Seligman HK, Rigdon J, Meigs JB, Basu S. Supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) participation and health care expenditures among low-income adults. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2017;177(11):1642-1649.
11. Kennedy, Brian. North Carolina Justice Center. SNAP is the Best Tool in the Fight Against Hunger.
12. Email Correspondence with Mary Yost, Durham Farmers’ Market Manager. March 14, 2018.
13. Rosenbaum, Dottie. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP is Effective and Efficient. March 11, 2013.
14. Rude, Emelyn. The Very Short History of Food Stamp Fraud In America. TIME Magazine. March 30, 2017.

Wendy Jacobs, Chair, Durham County Board of Commissioners

Tara Fikes, Chair, Durham County Social Services Board

Dr. F. Vincent Allison, III, Chair, Durham Board of Public Health

