

SNAP Cost Shifting in Tennessee

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the most powerful tools for fighting hunger in the United States. Currently, Congress is considering a proposal that would shift a significant portion of the cost of SNAP food benefits from the federal government to the states. This would break a 50-year commitment to helping every individual, in every community, have access to SNAP to help put enough food on the table.

Changing the way SNAP is funded would weaken the program and result in taking away food from children, seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities and families. It would push the program's costs onto financially strapped state governments – most of whom will be forced to make tough choices, including cuts to essential programs like public safety, local schools or raising state taxes.

By the Numbers¹



711,200 people in Tennessee received SNAP benefits in 2024. In 2022, the most recent year with SNAP household data, SNAP participants included 309,000 children and 89,000 seniors.



In FY24, states issued nearly \$94 billion for SNAP food benefits, including \$1.62 billion in Tennessee. For a sense of scale – food banks in Tennessee distributed an estimated 99.8 million meals in 2024.



If states were required to cover a portion of SNAP food benefits, Tennessee could be on the hook for 25% of SNAP benefits starting in 2028 – Tennessee would have to pay \$403 million in state tax dollars, equal to 150 million meals.



In addition, if states were also required to cover 75% of SNAP administrative costs (up from 50%), Tennessee would have to come up with an additional \$61.2 million for a total of \$185.9 million to maintain program operations.

¹ This data is intended to provide a sense of scale as to the impact of shifting significant costs to states. While we wait for CBO scores, we are providing estimated projections. We will update this resource as additional data is available. State administrative cost estimates are based on the most recent national data available through the State Activity Report for fiscal year 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snap-state-activity-reports>. For questions about the methodology, reach out to policy@feedingamerica.org.

We urge you to oppose any inclusion of funding cuts in budget reconciliation legislation that will result in less food and affordable health care resources for children, seniors, veterans and working families. No one wants to take access to affordable health care and food away from struggling families – but that will be the result of shifting federal costs to states. Most states cannot absorb a sudden shift in program funding responsibilities. This restructuring would likely force states to reduce food assistance benefits, making it harder for families in every congressional district to afford groceries.

Strong, thriving communities start with making sure every person - whether a child, senior, veteran, person with disability or working adult - has a foundation to build from: food on the table and access to health care. Food banks and our network of community kitchens, faith-based and partner pantries are doing everything we can to meet rising demand. Federal nutrition programs provide an unmatched scale and efficiency so people can access the food they need and it's critical to keep them strong.

To learn more visit Feeding America at feedingamerica.org.



SNAP helps children, seniors, veterans and working families access the food they need to thrive.



Ed, a volunteer and veteran, helps distribute food to his community.



Kristy and her husband both work full-time, but making ends meet can still be challenging. When needed, they turn to their local food bank for additional support.