

CAMPAIGN FOR THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

PROTECT OUR CARE

Eat Real Food – But Good Luck Paying For It

Cuts to SNAP and WIC Are Fueling a Hunger and Public Health Crisis

H.R. 1 Has Cut Millions Off From SNAP, While American Families Face A Widespread Affordability Crisis



Millions of people have already lost SNAP benefits since the passage of HR 1. HR 1, signed July 4, 2025, made deep cuts to federal funding for food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), shifting significant new costs to states, dramatically expanding harsh and ineffective work requirements, and ending eligibility for many people with a lawful immigration status. The Big Ugly Bill reduced federal SNAP spending by $187 billion over ten years. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, SNAP participation has already fallen by more than 5 million people — nearly 12 percent — as the provisions of the bill began being implemented. The declines are especially steep in some states. In Arizona alone, enrollment has collapsed by nearly 49 percent. In Louisiana, Virginia, and Tennessee, participation is down roughly 15 percent — and experts warn the full impact is still months away.

The House Agriculture FY2027 spending bill slashes food assistance for mothers and babies. The fiscal year 2027 Agriculture appropriations bill provides $200 million less for the WIC program than the FY2026 enacted level — a shortfall that the Food Research & Action Center warns would leave the program underfunded for the first time in three decades, potentially forcing states to turn away eligible families. Congress rejected identical Trump administration WIC cuts on a bipartisan basis last year. Congress should oppose these cuts on a bipartisan basis again this year.

- **The fruit and vegetable benefit is being gutted.** The House Ag appropriations would take away fruits and vegetables from families with low incomes, making it harder for young children to access essential nutrients during a critical developmental window. CBPP estimates that more than $141 million in fruit and vegetable benefits would be snatched from 5.4 million toddlers, preschoolers, and pregnant and postpartum WIC participants.

Rural families face a double threat. The FY 2027 Ag bill also fails to make permanent the phone and video appointment options that have become essential for WIC certification, particularly in rural communities where access to a WIC clinic may require hours of travel. Without congressional action, those virtual options expire September 30, 2026. In 2023, over 15 percent of rural households experienced food insecurity. Cutting WIC access on top of the SNAP cuts that are devastating rural communities deepens a geographic disparity that already puts rural children at a significant disadvantage.

Food Insecurity Is A Public Health Crisis



For many low-income families, losing SNAP also means losing health coverage. According to KFF, 78 percent of SNAP recipients — nearly 30 million people — are enrolled in Medicaid. Medicaid covers 88 percent of children who receive SNAP, approximately 13 million kids. H.R. 1 also cuts $793 billion from Medicaid and $268 billion from ACA Marketplaces, meaning millions of families face the loss of both food assistance and health coverage simultaneously. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the bill will increase the number of uninsured by 10.9 million over ten years.

Food insecurity is a health care cost driver — and it's already at crisis levels. Research shows food insecurity is associated with multiple chronic conditions, poorer self-reported health, higher health care utilization, and lower rates of medication adherence. SNAP recipients have measurably better health outcomes than similar eligible but not enrolled individuals. A May 2026 Federal Reserve Bank of New York survey found food insecurity in the United States has already reached levels not seen since the height of the pandemic in 2020, even before the full impact of the SNAP cuts has been felt.

Cutting WIC costs the country more in the long run. For every $1 spent on WIC, the federal government saves $2.48 in medical, educational, and productivity costs. WIC reduces Medicaid postpartum health care spending by nearly 50 percent in the first 60 days after birth. The program also keeps more than 200,000 people out of poverty each year.

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The Trump administration's own dietary guidelines make healthy eating more expensive. An analysis of 2,000 American consumers found that switching to the Trump administration's new dietary guidelines would raise household grocery spending by 32 percent — an average of $1,012 more per year. The increase is driven almost entirely by the new guidelines' heavy emphasis on meat. Half of the consumers surveyed identified cost as the main barrier to following the new recommendations.

RFK has made beef a centerpiece of his public health agenda, while millions of Americans can no longer afford it. RFK Jr.'s new MAHA dietary guidelines put protein at the top of the food pyramid and significantly elevated recommendations for red meat. At CattleCon 2026 in February, he told the cattle industry that beef is "essential to America's health" and declared the "war on protein is over." He launched a "national BBQ tour," visiting Austin's Terry Black's Barbecue and posting photos of himself holding a beef rib. Kennedy himself follows a carnivore diet — "I just eat meat and ferments," he told Fox News — and has said he eats beef once or twice a day. That same week as his Austin BBQ tour, at his own "Eat Real Food" rally, he was asked about families who can't afford the diet he promotes. His answer: skip the porterhouse. "You can buy liver, or the cheaper cuts of steak that are very, very affordable."

- **Cutting food aid as the cost of beef spirals out of reach.** Ground beef is up 19.3 percent year-over-year, with the USDA forecasting beef prices could climb as much as 18 percent overall in 2026 — prices at record highs driven by the national cattle herd at its smallest in decades, Trump's tariffs on beef imports, and rising production costs. The same beef Kennedy celebrated on his national BBQ tour is now crippling the Texas barbecue industry he visited: brisket wholesale costs have risen 28 percent in a year, with some of the state's most celebrated restaurants closing or rationing brisket to survive.

The grocery squeeze is already forcing impossible choices for American families. Grocery prices rose 2.7 percent through July compared to a year earlier, and are up nearly one-third since 2020. Economists warn that grocery prices will continue to rise through 2027 thanks to Trump's tariffs and the impact of the war in Iran, even as millions of Americans lose access to SNAP benefits that help them pay for food. A majority of Americans told a CNN poll they had changed what they buy at the grocery store to stay within budget, and 61 percent said they had cut back on groceries altogether. More than three-quarters of Americans — including 55 percent of Republicans — said Trump's policies had increased the cost of living in their community. Nearly half of all voters gave the economy the lowest possible rating — "poor" — in the latest New York Times/Siena poll, up 11 points since January, and economic confidence has hit a four-year low according to Gallup.



Thank You

A Message From Our Leaders



Georges C. Benjamin, MD
CEO, APHA

"Food assistance is preventive medicine, and Congress seems to be forgetting that. You can't promote a diet as the cure for chronic disease while gutting programs that let people afford a healthy one. SNAP participation has dropped by more than 5 million people since H.R. 1 passed, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a nonpartisan research institute, warns the full impact is still months away. The House is now moving to underfund WIC for the first time in three decades.

Meanwhile the administration's dietary guidelines push families toward beef, the grocery item that has gotten dramatically more expensive this year, per federal pricing data. Every dollar spent on WIC saves nearly two and a half dollars in medical and productivity costs, per federal research cited by the Food Research & Action Center. Congress rejected these same WIC cuts on a bipartisan basis last year. Nothing about the evidence has changed since then."



Leslie Dach
Chair, Protect Our Care

"Donald Trump and his allies in Congress made a 'Big Ugly' choice to rob food aid, Medicaid, and ACA tax credits from millions of struggling families to pay for more tax breaks for billionaires and big corporations. After promising to lower costs, Trump's first order of business as president was to rip food and health care away from working Americans, while rewarding the same corporations that have price gouged families. They chose to abandon the hungry to feed the profits of the uber wealthy.

After manufacturing greater food insecurity and a health care affordability crisis, the Trump administration poured salt on the wound with an unrealistic new food pyramid that would tack on over $1,000 to family grocery bills every year if followed. Now the Trump administration desperately wants praise for their empty policies that won't lead many to healthier diets, only harder choices like whether to put food on the table or see the doctor."

Food isn't optional. Neither is fighting for it.

Get the facts you need to speak up on how public health funding is impacting your state.