
March 20, 2023

House Republicans' Proposals Could Take Food Away From Millions of Low-Income Individuals and Families

By Katie Bergh and Dottie Rosenbaum

House Republicans are planning to release an annual budget resolution soon that will likely call for deep cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). House Republican leaders are pressing for cutting the deficit, refusing to raise revenues, and even calling for more tax cuts, while saying they will shield certain areas of the budget (Medicare, Social Security, and military spending) from cuts. This approach makes Medicaid and SNAP prime targets for proposed cuts.¹ Prominent Republicans have put forward several proposals to cut SNAP (the focus of this analysis) and there is a legislative vehicle to try to enact them: this year's expected farm bill to reauthorize SNAP and other Agriculture Committee programs.² Policymakers should reject these damaging proposals and instead focus on protecting and strengthening SNAP, including by improving benefit adequacy, expanding access for populations who have low incomes and are underserved by or excluded from SNAP, and enhancing customer service and modernization.

Republican policymakers are reportedly considering many SNAP cut proposals, all of which would end up taking food benefits away from families with low incomes and weaken the program's effectiveness at reducing food insecurity and poverty. Notably, a bill from House Agriculture Committee member Dusty Johnson and more than 20 other House Republicans would dramatically expand the population of people subject to policies that take SNAP away from people not meeting onerous work and work-reporting requirements. This is a punitive and ineffective approach that would put SNAP's grocery benefits at risk for adults up to age 65 and many families with school-age children in which parents or other adults are unable to work or cannot find jobs with enough hours.³

¹ Carl Hulse and Catie Edmondson, "House GOP Prepares to Slash Federal Programs in Coming Budget Showdown," *New York Times*, March 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/08/us/politics/house-republicans-deficit-budget-biden.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>.

² For a discussion of proposals to cut Medicaid, see Allison Orris and Sarah Lueck, "Congressional Republicans' Budget Plans Are Likely to Cut Health Coverage," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 2, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/congressional-republicans-budget-plans-are-likely-to-cut-health-coverage>.

³ America Works Act of 2023, H.R. 1581, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1581>; and Dusty Johnson, "Johnson Leads Work Requirements Fight in the U.S. House: The America Works Act closes loophole states have used to ignore existing work requirements," March 14, 2023, <https://dustyjohnson.house.gov/media/press-releases/johnson-leads-work-requirements-fight-us-house>.

Altogether more than 10 million people, about 1 in 4 SNAP participants, live in households that would be at risk of losing food assistance benefits under this bill. That includes about 6 million people who would potentially be newly subject to the time limit and at risk of losing eligibility for SNAP, and about 4 million children who live in families that could have their SNAP benefits reduced, harming the entire household.

House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington⁴ has similarly called for stricter work requirements in SNAP, even while such requirements have proven counterproductive and most SNAP participants who can work already do so. Budget plans put forward by the Republican Study Committee and by Trump-era Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought would also take food assistance away through harmful work requirements while, respectively, instituting a strict block grant (often used to promote large, unspecified cuts) and radically restructuring SNAP by capping program spending.⁵

In addition, the extensive cuts that House Republicans passed in their 2018 farm bill and similar measures the Trump Administration pursued by regulation could offer clues to what may be ahead in the farm bill debate.⁶ In 2018 we detailed how such provisions would hurt older people, workers, children, women, people with disabilities, and veterans.⁷ The House-passed bill would have caused more than 1 million households with more than 2 million people to lose benefits altogether or have them reduced.⁸ Those provisions were soundly rejected on a bipartisan basis in the Senate.

SNAP cuts could not come at a worse time. Food inflation remains high and SNAP's temporary, pandemic-related benefits ended after February issuances. The result of the latter was a reduction of at least \$95 per month in SNAP benefits for 17 million SNAP households in the 35 states and other jurisdictions that still were providing the additional benefits, the loss of which in the other states has been felt for months.⁹ With the end of these temporary benefits, SNAP benefits average only about \$6 per person per day.¹⁰

⁴ House Budget Committee, "The Debt Limit and Fiscal Restraint," press release, February 8, 2023, <https://budget.house.gov/press-release/the-debt-limit-and-fiscal-restraint/>.

⁵ Republican Study Committee, "Blueprint To Save America; Fiscal Year 2023 Budget," <https://rsc-her.house.gov/fy2023-budget>; Center for Renewing America, "A Commitment to End Woke and Weaponized Government: 2023 Budget Proposal," <https://americarenewing.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Budget-Center-for-Renewing-America-FY23.pdf>.

⁶ Ed Bolen *et al.*, "House Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship," CBPP, July 30, 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-farm-bill-would-increase-food-insecurity-and-hardship>.

⁷ Bolen, *op. cit.*, and CBPP, "House Farm Bill Briefs – Who Would Its SNAP Proposals Harm?" June and July, 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/resource-lists/house-farm-bill-briefs-who-would-its-snap-proposals-harm>.

⁸ Bolen, *op. cit.*

⁹ Tim Craig, "A Mile-long Line for Free Food Offers a Warning as COVID Benefits End," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/03/04/pandemic-food-stamps-ending/>.

¹⁰ Dottie Rosenbaum, Katie Bergh, and Lauren Hall, "Temporary Pandemic SNAP Benefits Will End in Remaining 35 States in March 2023," CBPP, February 6, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/temporary-pandemic-snap-benefits-will-end-in-remaining-35-states-in-march>.

Despite its modest benefit amounts, SNAP is our nation’s most effective and important tool to fight hunger, reaching over 40 million children, parents, older adults, disabled people, workers, and other low-income people each month, or about 1 in 8 people in the U.S. SNAP has been found to reduce food insecurity and is linked to improved health, education, and economic outcomes and to lower medical costs for participants.¹¹

Some policymakers have suggested SNAP’s spending levels are problematic and justify cuts, but SNAP spending is driven by need, that is, the number of people who qualify for assistance under the program’s rules and who apply (and, during the pandemic, by the emergency benefits provided). And the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that SNAP spending will fall this year as temporary COVID-19 relief measures end and the economy continues to recover from the pandemic recession, and then will remain flat (even without adjusting for inflation) for the next decade.¹²

Main Impact of Proposals That Take Food Assistance Away From People Who Don’t Show They Meet a Work Requirement Is to Increase Poverty and Hardship

Many Republicans have long sought to expand SNAP’s already harsh work requirements, including its rule limiting benefit receipt to three months out of *every three years* for adults aged 18 through 49 who can’t document they meet the work requirement or are otherwise exempt. Former President Trump, for example, sought through regulation to substantially narrow the ability to waive this three-month time limit in areas with insufficient jobs and, in 2013 and 2018, House Republicans expanded harmful work requirements in their proposed farm bills.

More recent proposals are consistent with that effort. Johnson’s bill (H.R. 1581) would expand the population of people who must document they work or participate in a qualifying employment and training program a certain number of hours or face a three-month time limit to include adults up to age 65 (instead of age 50) and adult participants who live in a household with school-age children. It also would take away states’ existing flexibilities to waive punitive work rules in areas with insufficient jobs.¹³

Arrington, meanwhile, is seeking to cut “tens of billions” of dollars from SNAP and other programs by “reinstating” work requirements in budget negotiations this year.¹⁴ Vought, the former OMB director whose plan many Republicans reportedly are embracing, has said that “a work requirement food stamp program is a lot easier to sell than [Medicare] premium support.”¹⁵

These misguided efforts ignore the reality that most SNAP participants who can work already do so — often in essential frontline service or sales roles like cashiers, cooks, or home health aides.

¹¹ Ty Jones Cox, “SNAP Is and Remains Our Most Effective Tool to Combat Hunger,” CBPP, February 14, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/snap-is-and-remains-our-most-effective-tool-to-combat-hunger>.

¹² Dottie Rosenbaum, “Setting the Record Straight About SNAP Spending and the Upcoming Farm Bill,” CBPP, February 24, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/setting-the-record-straight-about-snap-spending-and-the-upcoming-farm-bill>.

¹³ America Works Act of 2023, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ House Budget Committee and Center for Renewing America, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Hulse and Edmondson, *op. cit.*

SNAP is a critical support for these workers, as these jobs typically pay low wages, offer unreliable hours, and don't provide benefits such as paid sick leave, one of many reasons that these jobs also are unstable. Other SNAP participants are only temporarily between jobs, often turning to SNAP after a job loss to help them weather the storm. Before the pandemic, in a typical month about 75 percent of SNAP households with children and at least one working-age adult were working that month, and almost 90 percent of such households had earnings in the year prior to or the year after, reflecting that joblessness is often a temporary condition for SNAP participants.¹⁶

Additionally, SNAP *already* has very harsh rules. As noted, in general adults aged 18 through 49 without children in their homes can receive benefits for only three months out of every three years, unless they can document they are working or participate in a qualifying work program at least 20 hours a week or prove they are unable to work.¹⁷ These requirements were not in effect during the public health emergency, but are now slated to go back into effect in July 2023. When in effect, this policy takes SNAP away from large numbers of people because they are out of work.

In his press release, Rep. Dusty Johnson argues that “[w]ork is the best pathway out of poverty,”¹⁸ but the harsh three-month time limit on adult SNAP participants without children has not been shown to improve employment. Independent studies have repeatedly shown that SNAP’s 20-hour work-or-lose-benefits rule does not increase employment or earnings. It just cuts people off from the food assistance they need to buy groceries.¹⁹ A recent study found that that the time limit cut SNAP participation among those subject to it by more than half (53 percent).²⁰

Under the Johnson SNAP proposal, nondisabled adults aged 18 through 64 would be subject to the time limit unless they have a child under age 7 in their home. Those at risk of losing food assistance include veterans, people experiencing homelessness, older adults aged 50 through 64 who may no longer be able to work in physically demanding jobs, and people with physical or mental health conditions who do not receive disability benefits, which have very strict and narrow eligibility requirements that exclude many people with conditions that can impede or limit employment (sometimes temporarily).

¹⁶ CBPP, “Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” June 2022, and Brynne Keith-Jennings and Raheem Chaudhry, “Issue Brief: Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs,” CBPP, March, 23, 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/issue-brief-most-working-age-snap-participants-work-but-often-in-unstable>.

¹⁷ States also have a long-standing option to set tough work requirements for a broader group of working-age adults and can cut off benefits for people who can't comply. Most states have not imposed such requirements because there is no clear evidence to show they help people find work, but they do usually impose costs and administrative burdens on the state.

¹⁸ Dusty Johnson, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ LaDonna Pavetti *et al.*, “Expanding Work Requirements Would Make it Harder for People to Meet Basic Needs: Would Do Little to Improve Long-Term Work Opportunities and Outcomes,” CBPP, March, 15, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/expanding-work-requirements-would-make-it-harder-for-people-to-meet>.

²⁰ Colin Gray *et al.*, “Employed in a SNAP: The Impact of Work Requirements on Program Participation and Labor Supply,” *American Economic Association Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1, February 2023, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20200561>.

But the impact goes well beyond these groups. When an individual subject to the requirement loses benefits the *entire household* is hurt, including children, seniors, and people receiving disability benefits. While remaining household members may continue to receive SNAP, the household's benefit is too low to meet everyone's food needs.

That means that proposals like Johnson's to make parents of school-age children subject to harsh work rules would also take food away from children. If an adult in the household can't prove they are meeting the requirement, the whole household will receive less in SNAP benefits and will have fewer resources available to buy food. The impacts of food insecurity and hunger on children are well-documented, with even short periods of food insecurity resulting in harm to their mental and physiological development and increased risk of adverse health outcomes.²¹

Many people who will have their food assistance taken away will be people proponents claim should not be affected by the policy at all. Because the 20-hour work rule significantly increases red tape for states and families, people can lose benefits even if they *are* working but they can't document enough hours, or if they shouldn't be subject to the work requirement (because of ill health, for example) but their state fails to screen them for an exemption.²² This has been documented in both SNAP and other programs that have imposed work requirements on those receiving assistance. For example, 1 in 3 individuals identified by the Franklin County SNAP agency in Ohio as subject to the 20-hour work rule were later identified as having a physical or mental condition that impacted their ability to work, a condition that likely should have made them exempt from the requirement.²³

Millions at Risk of Having Their Benefits Taken Away Under Johnson's Work Proposal

A total of more than 10 million people, about 1 in 4 SNAP participants, including about 4 million children, live in households that would be at risk of losing food assistance under the Johnson bill, based on our preliminary estimates.²⁴ That includes:

- Some 3 million adults up to age 65, primarily parents or grandparents, who live in households with school-age children. The 4 million children aged 7 to 18 who live in these households would see their household's food assistance fall if their parents or other adults in the family aren't able to meet the requirement.
- About 2 million older adults, aged 50 to 64 who do not have children in their homes.

²¹ Daphne Hernandez and Alison Jacknowitz, "Transient, But Not Persistent, Adult Food Insecurity Influences Toddler Development," *Journal of Nutrition*, 139(8):1517-24, 2009, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19535426/>; and Steven Carlson and Joseph Llobrera, "SNAP Is Linked With Improved Health Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs," CBPP, December 14, 2022, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-health-outcomes-and-lower-health-care-costs>.

²² Ed Bolen, Joseph Llobrera, and Brynne Keith-Jennings, "Permanently End the SNAP Cut-Off to Support a More Equitable Recovery," CBPP, May 4, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/permanently-end-the-snap-cut-off-to-support-a-more-equitable-recovery>.

²³ See "Franklin County Work Experience Program: Comprehensive Report, Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents," 2014, https://admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/ABAWD_Report_2014-2015-v3.pdf.

²⁴ Figures are based on CBPP analysis of the 2019 SNAP Household Characteristics data. In 2019 there were approximately 37 million SNAP participants, which is similar to the 38 million average annual number of SNAP participants CBO's current baseline forecasts over the 2024 to 2033 period.

- Adults who would become newly subject to the time limit in areas with elevated unemployment because their state could no longer seek waivers from it. The bill would substantially limit state flexibility to temporarily waive the harsh time limit if there aren't enough jobs. Only areas with unemployment over 10 percent would qualify for waivers. The Trump Administration estimated that their proposal, which would have been less restrictive than Johnson's, would have resulted in more than 700,000 people losing eligibility for SNAP.²⁵

Not everyone newly subject to these requirements would lose benefits under the proposal. Many people would, for example, be working more than 20 hours a week and be able to navigate the work verification system or states would find them to be exempt from the time limit because of a physical or mental limitation. But a very significant number are likely to be impacted because they are out of work, the state failed to screen them for an exemption they should have qualified for, or they were unable to navigate the verification system to prove they are working.

Instead of applying these ineffective policies to more people or making them even more punitive, policymakers should advance policies that truly support employment *without* leaving people hungrier.

Eliminating Popular Eligibility Option Would Create Benefit Cliffs, Disincentivize Work, and Worsen Red Tape

Another SNAP rule that long has been a target of some Republicans is a provision that more than 40 states have used to modestly raise SNAP's income eligibility limits. The policy, known as broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), provides help affording adequate food to many low-income, working families who have difficulty making ends meet, for instance because they face costly housing or child care expenses that consume a sizable share of their income. BBCE also lets states adopt less restrictive asset tests so that families, older adults, and people with a disability can have modest savings without losing SNAP.²⁶

The House-passed 2018 farm bill and most recent Republican Study Committee budget plans call for rolling back BBCE and reimposing stricter federal income and asset tests. President Trump also proposed making similar changes by regulation, which his Administration estimated would terminate SNAP for more than 3 million individuals. The people losing access to SNAP's food assistance would mainly be working families, older adults, and disabled people with high expenses for important basic needs, like housing. These are groups that many federal and state policy makers have long sought to help: those working but still near poverty and those saving modestly in order to become more economically independent.

²⁵ We have not independently estimated the impact of the Trump Administration's proposed rule.

²⁶ These (37) jurisdictions use BBCE to lift both the income and asset tests: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Hawai'i, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Another seven states use BBCE to lift just the asset test: Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. [https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/BBCE-States-Chart-\(Jan-2023\)-508-1.5.23.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/BBCE-States-Chart-(Jan-2023)-508-1.5.23.pdf).

States have used BBCE to extend SNAP's reach to low-income households that struggle to afford food but might not otherwise meet SNAP's rigid income and asset tests. BBCE:

- **Helps working families by eliminating a “benefit cliff” as their earnings rise.** One way SNAP supports work is by phasing benefits down gradually — by only 24 to 36 cents for each dollar of increased earnings. But without BBCE, a family can lose substantial SNAP benefits from a small earnings increase that raises their gross income over SNAP's federal eligibility threshold (130 percent of the federal poverty line, or \$2,495 per month for a family of three in fiscal year 2023). This often costs them more in lost benefits than what their raise is worth, and thus disincentives work advancements. BBCE allows households to increase their gross income slightly above this threshold without abruptly losing eligibility altogether, phasing their benefits down more gradually as they earn more.

It is notable that many policymakers of both parties have cited benefit cliffs as a problem they want to solve. The previous Republican chair of the House Agriculture Committee noted, “...SNAP recipients may face a 'welfare cliff' when they are just above the income eligibility level, which can create disincentives to finding work or increasing earnings.”²⁷ BBCE directly resolves this, allowing benefits to phase down gradually as earnings rise, and yet the policy remains a target for cuts.

- **Lets low-income households save for the future.** Modest assets enable low-income families to avoid debt, weather unexpected financial disruptions, and better prepare to support themselves in retirement. Under regular federal SNAP rules, countable assets cannot exceed \$2,750 for most households and \$4,250 for households with members who are elderly or have a disability; BBCE lets states increase or eliminate those limits for SNAP. Low-income households in states that have used the policy to raise asset limits are likelier to have a bank account and have at least \$500 in it, a recent Urban Institute study found.²⁸
- **Simplifies SNAP administration.** BBCE reduces the complexity of the SNAP application process for states and households. Even though few low-income households that apply for SNAP have assets above the federal limits, states that do not use BBCE to lift the asset test must ask applicant households about their assets and review documentation of those assets. BBCE also lowers “churn,” which occurs when SNAP households stop participating in SNAP (for procedural reasons or because they briefly become ineligible) and then reapply within a very short period. Churn creates added work for state workers and benefit gaps for SNAP households.²⁹

Block-Granting or Capping SNAP Would Undermine Its Anti-Hunger Role, Force States to Make Deep Cuts

²⁷ House Committee on Agriculture, “Past, Present, & Future of SNAP: Hearing Series Findings: 114th Congress,” 2016, https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/snap_report_2016.pdf.

²⁸ Caroline Ratcliffe *et al.*, “The Unintended Consequences of SNAP Asset Limits,” Urban Institute, July 2016, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/82886/2000872-The-Unintended-Consequences-of-SNAP-Asset-Limits.pdf>.

²⁹ Dottie Rosenbaum, “SNAP's ‘Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility’ Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future,” CBPP, July 30, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/7-24-19fa.pdf>.

As the Republican Study Committee budget notes, “for many years, conservatives have pushed for SNAP to be converted into a discretionary block grant to the states” The budget from the Center for Renewing America (Vought’s group) also proposes capping total SNAP spending at a level that represents approximately half of current program spending. Such proposals often are a way for policymakers to back very large SNAP cuts without specifying which SNAP participants would lose food assistance, whether it’s families with children, older adults, or people with disabilities.

These proposals would undermine one of SNAP’s greatest strengths: anyone who qualifies under SNAP program rules can receive benefits. SNAP’s structure allows enrollment to automatically expand when the economy weakens and contract when the economy recovers and fewer people need assistance. This automatic response not only eases food hardship for the people impacted by a downturn, but also acts as an important economic stimulus when households then use their benefits to buy groceries from local stores. Setting an arbitrary spending cap or block grant would mean that SNAP would no longer be able to automatically respond to increased need if there is a future recession, natural disaster, or pandemic. Families facing difficult circumstances would no longer have a guarantee that they could get help to buy groceries.³⁰

Instead, if states wanted to let the program expand when need rises, state budgets would have to cover the full additional cost of meeting additional food assistance needs. Given state budget constraints (particularly during tough economic times), however, it is more likely that states would be forced to make significant cuts in eligibility, benefits, or both. They could shield some households from cuts, but then other households would need to bear even larger cuts.

Converting SNAP into a state block grant would also have serious consequences for program integrity and accountability. Depending on how a block grant were structured, it could allow states to divert federal funds meant to pay for food for low-income families to plug holes in their state budgets — similar to what happens under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant — while undercutting existing, rigorous federal processes to combat fraud and ensure payment accuracy.

It is worth noting that CBO projects SNAP spending will fall in fiscal year 2023 as pandemic-related benefit increases, eligibility expansions, and other flexibilities expire, and forecasts that SNAP spending will remain flat even in nominal terms over the next decade.³¹

Other Changes Would Increase Paperwork and Costs for States, at Low-Income Families’ Expense

The proposals listed above do not represent an exhaustive list of harmful changes to SNAP that Congress could seek to advance this year. Policymakers have previously proposed numerous other misguided changes to SNAP that would erect unnecessary barriers to accessing benefits and increase

³⁰ Dottie Rosenbaum, “Block-Granting SNAP Would Abandon Decades-Long Federal Commitment to Reducing Hunger,” CBPP, March 30, 2017, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/block-granting-snap-would-abandon-decades-long-federal-commitment-to>.

³¹ Dottie Rosenbaum, “Setting the Record Straight about SNAP Spending and the Upcoming Farm Bill,” CBPP, February 24, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/setting-the-record-straight-about-snap-spending-and-the-upcoming-farm-bill>.

paperwork for states and families, including by eliminating other widely used state options to streamline program administration or adding punitive and stigmatizing requirements for participants. While these proposals are often billed as ways to “close loopholes” or “reduce fraud,” many of these ideas are entirely untested. Other proposals, such as requiring photo ID on electronic benefit transfer cards or mandating cooperation with child support enforcement efforts, are existing but deeply unpopular state options because they increase administrative expenses borne by states and the federal government, don’t offer any clear benefits, and make it more difficult for low-income people to access the benefits they need to afford food.

Congress Should Reject Harmful Cuts and Instead Focus on Opportunities to Strengthen SNAP

SNAP is successful at reducing poverty and food insecurity and should be both protected this year from cuts and be strengthened in some areas so that it does more to combat food insecurity and hunger.

First, it’s critical that Congress ensure that benefits are adequate to purchase a healthy diet, including by protecting the recent revision to the Thrifty Food Plan, which helps align SNAP benefit levels more closely with the cost of healthy foods.³²

It’s also important to address the significant barriers that certain populations face in accessing SNAP, including program rules that exclude some low-income, food-insecure people entirely, such as the three-month time limit discussed above, a ban on people with drug-related felony convictions, and the exclusion of certain U.S. territories from participating in SNAP. Due to historical racism and ongoing discrimination in areas including employment, education, and the criminal legal system, these barriers and exclusions disproportionately affect low-income people of color and contribute to the long-standing racial disparities in rates of food insecurity.³³ Finally, Congress should take steps to ensure that SNAP keeps pace with evolving technology and has strong customer service standards to ensure that SNAP is accessible, fair, and respectful to people who may participate.

³² Joseph Llobrera, Matt Saenz, and Lauren Hall, “USDA Announces Important SNAP Benefit Modernization,” CBPP, August 26, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/usda-announces-important-snap-benefit-modernization>.

³³ Joseph Llobrera, “Food Insecurity at a Two-Decade Low for Households With Kids, Signaling Successful Relief Efforts,” CBPP, September 9, 2022, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/food-insecurity-at-a-two-decade-low-for-households-with-kids-signaling-successful-relief>.