Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

CBPP STATEMENT
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Trump Administration Rule Would Take SNAP Away From Millions More Working Families, Seniors, and People With Disabilities

Statement of Ty Jones Cox, Vice President for Food Assistance, on proposed changes to broad-based categorical eligibility provision

In the midterm elections, the public indicated they want their elected officials to focus on making life affordable. Yet the Trump Administration is doubling down on making it harder for people to feed their families, after already enacting the deepest cuts to SNAP in history. The Administration today resurrected a harmful proposed rule that by the Administration's own estimates, would take SNAP food assistance away from more than 6 million people.

The people who would lose help affording groceries are primarily working families with kids as well as seniors and people with disabilities. The Administration estimates that, if implemented, the rule would cut SNAP benefits by roughly $15 billion a year once it is phased in, or $51 billion over the 2028-2031 four-year period. That's more than 15 percent cut on top of the deep cuts in the 2025 Republican reconciliation law. Since last July, 5.5 million fewer people are receiving SNAP food assistance, according to USDA data through July 2026. That far exceeds the number of people who were projected to lose SNAP at the time the law was enacted.

The proposal would dramatically narrow a provision of federal law, known as "broad-based categorical eligibility" (BBCE), taking away flexibility Congress gave to states to modestly raise SNAP's restrictive federal income eligibility limits and asset tests. BBCE, which about 45 states have adopted, allows working families who spend most of their income on necessary expenses, like rent or child care, to receive help affording groceries and allows families, seniors, and people with disabilities to build modest savings without losing SNAP.

The Administration's proposal would terminate SNAP for households with gross incomes even slightly above 130 percent of the poverty line (about $35,500 per year for a family of three), and it would make it harder and more expensive for states to administer SNAP. The proposed rule creates more administrative burdens for states, undermining their efforts to improve their error rates. This could not come at a worse time – the 2025 Republican reconciliation law will require most states to pay between 5

and 15 percent of the cost of SNAP benefits for the first time based on their error rate. Taking away an important tool to streamline program administration and reduce errors will worsen incentives for states to further cut their SNAP programs, putting vital food assistance for low-income families at risk of even more cuts.

On top of that, the Trump Administration today published a second proposed rule to implement the expansion of SNAP's harsh and ineffective work requirement enacted in the harmful 2025 Republican reconciliation law. When these two proposals are combined, they set up a no-win situation for people. Many more people are now required to document compliance with a work requirement to continue receiving food assistance. But those who manage to increase their earnings would be at risk of immediately getting cut off SNAP because of the strict income eligibility limit the proposed rule rolling back BBCE creates. For some households, the loss of SNAP benefits would be greater than the increase in their income, essentially punishing them for earning more income.

Instead of listening to the public sentiment on affordability following the election, the Administration is continuing its attacks on vital food assistance and the families who need help to put food on the table. These attacks are part of the Administration's broader policy agenda that has raised costs and made it harder for working families to afford their basic needs, all to partially pay for trillions of dollars in tax cuts heavily weighted to the wealthy and fund its extreme and aggressive immigration detention apparatus. But in a country as wealthy as ours, everyone should be able to afford to meet their basic needs. Instead of punishing working families and penalizing seniors and people with disabilities who have modest savings, the Administration should be looking for ways to help families afford groceries and simplify program rules.

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