Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

CBPP STATEMENT
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As Millions Lose SNAP, Senate Farm Bill Proposal Ignores Urgent Need to Protect Food Assistance for Low-Income Families

Statement of Ty Jones Cox, Vice President for Food Assistance on Chair Boozman's Farm Bill Proposal

The farm bill proposal released today by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman ignores the rapidly worsening hunger crisis in the wake of the 2025 Republican reconciliation law (H.R. 1). This law made the deepest cuts to SNAP in history, but the harm unfolding across the country is already far greater than many anticipated, with more than 4 million people losing SNAP through March. Even more people will lose the vital food assistance they need to afford groceries unless Congress immediately delays H.R. 1's unprecedented shift of significant new SNAP costs to states. Policymakers failing to act in the face of this emergency is unconscionable. This proposal — or any legislation with farm relief that ignores the urgent need to mitigate this harm — should be rejected.

Starting in October 2027, H.R. 1 will slash federal funding for SNAP benefits and impose these costs on most states. The amount each state will have to pay is based on its payment error rate — a measure of over and underpayments that largely reflects unintentional mistakes. As states have raced to reduce their measured error rate, some have taken drastic actions that are making it far harder for eligible people to access the help they need to afford groceries. Ironically, when eligible families lose out on SNAP altogether because of these actions, this "error" doesn't count in the state's error rate.

We're already seeing the impact: the number of low-income people receiving SNAP fell by more than 4 million between H.R. 1's enactment in July 2025 and March 2026. That's a 10 percent drop in only eight months and the steepest drop in decades. In just 13 states with available data, the number of *children* receiving SNAP has fallen by more than 800,000 since H.R. 1's enactment.

And more people will lose SNAP as this ticking time bomb begins to hit state budgets. In the face of this massive cost shift, some states could withdraw from the program entirely, eliminating food assistance for children, seniors, people with disabilities, workers paid low wages, and others who need SNAP to meet their basic needs. Some 11 percent of states responding to a survey from the American Public Human Services Association identified the potential risk that they'll withdraw from SNAP as a result of the cost shift, and 5 percent said there's a risk that they'll pause SNAP operations.

Many people who have lost SNAP are in groups that weren't intended to be the target of H.R. 1's eligibility restrictions, like children. That means many struggling families are losing SNAP because they can't navigate new bureaucratic obstacles or they are going without the help they need as additional red tape pushes understaffed state agencies to their breaking point. Seniors have empty fridges. Parents have hungry children and nowhere left to turn but already overburdened food banks, who have made clear that they cannot fill the gap.

State and local officials are calling on Congress to act. Without action, they're warning of dire consequences for low-income families and the broader economy.

Congress must heed this call and give *all* states — not just a favored few who will benefit from a special carveout under H.R. 1 — more time to improve their payment accuracy, which will determine their required share of SNAP costs, while ensuring eligible low-income families can still access the food assistance they need to afford groceries.

For more than 50 years, SNAP has reflected a nationwide commitment to addressing hunger, ensuring eligible low-income people can get the help they need regardless of where they live. Unless Congress acts in the face of this emergency, these federal cuts could drive some states to walk away from that commitment. Struggling families who can least afford it will bear the cost.