



Legislation Text

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Preconsidered Res. No. 1636

Resolution urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant.

By The Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito) and Council Members Kallos and Levin

Whereas, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, provides critical food assistance to people struggling to make ends meet, and has contributed to the overall reduction in poverty nationwide; and

Whereas, Several studies have found that SNAP benefits reduce food insecurity, which occurs when households lack consistent access to nutritious food because of limited resources; and

Whereas, Studies have also shown that access to SNAP can improve the health and educational outcomes of children; and

Whereas, In addition, economists consider SNAP to be one of the most effective forms of economic stimulus because every dollar of SNAP benefits that is spent generates about \$1.79 in local economic activity, according to the Food Research and Action Center; and

Whereas, Despite improvements in the nation's economy since the Great Recession ended in 2009, hunger and food insecurity still remain high; and

Whereas, In recent years there have been efforts to either cut SNAP funding or convert it into a block grant; and

Whereas, Many eligible SNAP recipients in New York City and across the nation rely on this essential program, especially at a time when many families are experiencing financial hardship, therefore, neither a reduction nor a conversion option is feasible; and

Whereas, According to the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO), President Donald Trump's proposed 2018 budget would cut SNAP benefits nationwide by \$193 billion over 10 years by moving some of the grant costs to the states, which could potentially increase the state's burden for SNAP to 25 percent by 2023, along with program reductions and stricter eligibility requirements; and

Whereas, The IBO also indicates that such reductions would mean that New York State would have to contribute approximately \$1.2 billion a year by 2023, forcing State officials to either reduce benefits, cut other programs to maintain food stamp funding, raise taxes or other revenues, or shift costs to New York City and other localities; and

Whereas, Under this proposal, reduced funds to SNAP would no longer guarantee that a family would be eligible for the same level of food assistance; and

Whereas, As of July 2017, nearly 1.7 million New York City residents receive SNAP benefits, according to the New York City Human Resources Administration; and

Whereas, Furthermore, New York City residents make up more than half (57 percent) of all New York State participants in SNAP; and

Whereas, According to the United States Department of Agriculture, an estimated 1.4 million (16 percent) New Yorkers were food insecure in 2015, the latest data available; and

Whereas, In that same year, New Yorkers missed approximately 225 million meals, also known as "The Meal Gap," according to Feeding America, the nation's leading hunger-relief organization; and

Whereas, According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), the average SNAP household nationwide receives about \$255 a month in SNAP benefits, which is an average of \$1.40 per person per meal; and

Whereas, The CBPP also reported that nearly 80 percent of SNAP benefits are used within the first half of the month; and

Whereas, Due to the fact that SNAP benefits are currently inadequate and run out before the end of the

month, many families and individuals are left without enough food and often rely on emergency food assistance programs, such as food pantries and soup kitchens, to supplement their meals; and

Whereas, According to the Food Bank for New York City, nearly three in ten food pantries and soup kitchens surveyed in New York City reported that they had turned people away during the month of September 2016 because they had run out of food, or the particular types of food required to make adequate meals or pantry bags; and

Whereas, Cuts to SNAP would jeopardize the nation's primary food assistance safety net, especially at a time when food banks, and other hunger-relief groups are stretched to meet sustained high need; and

Whereas, Furthermore, converting SNAP into a block grant would give each state fixed funding for the year, and consequently, states would be unable to automatically respond to any increased need, especially during an economic downturn; and

Whereas, Such a harmful change to the structure of SNAP would result in a reduction or complete loss of benefits for millions of people at a time of elevated need, and would eliminate the program's ability to immediately respond to fluctuations in the economy and changes in need; and

Whereas, The federal government should continue to support SNAP in order to promote opportunity and economic mobility, while also ensuring a strong safety net that protects individuals who are facing hard times; and

Whereas, The United States Congress should make a commitment to ensure that SNAP remains fully funded, and that even additional funding is provided to significantly reduce hunger in New York City and across the nation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant.

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