



NTFB VOICE Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

In Brief -

- School Meals want to change. Submit a comment.
- Losing Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility means more hunger
- The History of Bananas?

The Proposed Rule Changes to School Meals: Good & Bad

Thank you to all of you who commented your feelings on school meal changes in the last advocacy update.

The proposed changes to school meals have some good changes but also some concerning ones.

The Food & Nutrition Service will be accepting comments on the changes until March 23rd. We ask that you leave a comment on items that are concerning. By law the publishers of the rule change must read all comments that are submitted. Use your voice!

Of top concerns are

- Switching up the kinds of vegetables that make up the 5 cup/week veggie requirement (i.e. more french fries likely)
- Allowing vegetables to be substituted for fruit at breakfast (e.g. hash brown sticks in place of apples & oranges)
- Requiring schools to offer flavored water (but why though?)

[We have created a campaign page with our concerns.](#)

Next update, we will have another page with our applause for the items we support in the rule change. We ask you to go use your voice and leave a comment. All comments submitted will be published in the federal registrar.

NTFB team, please leave your personal thoughts! NTFB will also be submitting a formal comment on behalf of the organization.

Losing Categorical Eligibility for SNAP Would Not Be Good for Texas Y'all

Broad-based categorical eligibility has allowed 43 states to expand the number of low-income people who qualify for SNAP. If finalized, an estimated 3.1 million people would be cut from the program, saving about \$1.9 billion a year. The number of families on SNAP helps determine whether a school district is in a high-poverty area, and therefore qualifies for offering free meals to all students. USDA estimates that nearly 1 million students could lose this benefit.

Though SNAP's Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility is both a mouthful and complicated, the result is clear. Kids & school districts will lose a lot of free school meals & many households will no longer be eligible to apply for SNAP (food stamps).

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue argues that for too long states have misused the flexibility under the current policy rules. Without Broad Based Categorical Eligibility, the maximum gross household income allowed to apply for SNAP is set at 130% of the federal poverty level (i.e. about \$27,000 a year for a family of 3, or \$13 an hour for a full-time job).

However, in Texas, Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility allows households up to 165% of the federal poverty level to apply for SNAP (i.e. about \$36,000 a year for a family of 3, or \$17.25 per hour).

This shift will have devastating consequences for that "family of 3 household" that lives between the gross \$13-\$17.25 full-time salary range. They would be no longer eligible to apply for SNAP.

Also, there's all the other households with different calculations that exist between 130%-165% of the federal poverty levels (e.g. for a family of 4 full time job incomes between \$16.40-\$20.78/hour can lose their ability to apply for SNAP).

So all-in-all, the change will result in over 3.1 million people no longer able to apply & receive SNAP. This will lead to decreased SNAP participation in a school district area, which leads to schools & districts losing their free lunch status through [community eligibility](#), which leads to hungry students.

North Texas Food Bank made a comment against this rule change when it came out months ago, but no final rule has been published. It is expected at any time. This change was rejected by congress in the Farm Bill.

Bananas are so cheap! But wait...why are they so cheap?

Have you ever wondered why bananas are SO cheap? I mean really, they are only around 45-50 cents a pound!

Bananas are a staple of the healthy on-the-go food movement and can be found next to almost every gas station register, yet they don't really grow in the United States...

If you have a long commute or have some time to kill, I recommend listening to this podcast by ThroughLine on the history of the banana industry.

I laughed, I cried, I really cried, and now I don't know how I feel about bananas...

There Will Be Bananas

[Spotify](#)

[Apple Podcasts](#)

[Google Podcasts](#)

If you get a chance to listen, hit reply and tell me what you thought.

Questions or Comments?

If Bananas are that dramatic, I'm afraid to search for anthropology of pineapples...

Valerie Stone Hawthorne, PhD

Government Relations Director

North Texas Food Bank

Direct: 832.851.0303

policy@ntfb.org



Don't want these updates any longer? Email policy@ntfb.org and I'll remove you quickly but remorsefully...