

Advocacy Update & Action 03.12.2021



The new COVID relief package, also known as the American Rescue Plan Act has a lot of financial relief for Americans.

Spoiler Alert: What does this package mean for North Texas hunger? Less hungry neighbors and increased food security.

This package increases the ability for households to buy their own food and if they still need help, there's increased support for the emergency feeding network too.

You can see the actual agriculture and nutrition text here:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text#toc-HB231E7D49FF343A1A7753BA1B86043BB>

Agriculture & Nutrition

Taken from a few sources, here is what is in the ag/nutrition package -

- An extension to the 15% increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for all participants through September 30, 2021, or about \$27 per month per person, with \$1.15 billion allocated for the cost of state administrative expenses.
- Access to the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program available for the duration of the health emergency, including through the summer, to allow families with children receiving school meals to purchase healthy food more easily during the pandemic.
- Allows young adults up to 24 years old to be eligible to receive healthy Child and Adult Care Food Program meals at homeless and youth-serving shelters.
- Investments in technological improvements to expand access for families to use their SNAP benefits to purchase groceries online.
- Investments in innovation to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

- \$880 million to deliver expanded access to more fruits and vegetables for mothers and babies (through WIC)
- \$37 million for senior nutrition through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (Monthly Senior Boxes)
- \$1 billion in nutrition assistance for the US territories.
- Invests in infrastructure and retooling support for food processors, farmers markets, food banks, local food systems, and producers to build resiliency in the food supply for the long term (more to come).
- Increases food available for distribution through food banks, nonprofits, or restaurants to help feed families in need and at the same time supports farmers by purchasing their products (more to come).

Child Tax Credit

This expansion of the Child Tax Credit is huge. It will run until the end of the year, and it being carefully studied as an experiment on its impact on child poverty rates.

- Currently, most taxpayers can reduce their federal income tax bill up to about \$2,000 per child. When filing your annual income tax bill, you take a deduction for each child if you are eligible to receive it.
- This increases and expands this deduction up to \$3,600 per child for children 6 and under, and up to \$3,000 for children aged 6-17, likely beginning in July.
- Additionally, families may be able to opt-in to receive this credit monthly (if the Treasury Department agrees) until the end of the year, instead of receiving a once-a-year credit.
- This can be helpful for families that have large fluctuations in their income month to month due to seasonal work, no income, or service-oriented income changes.
- This maximum benefit would go to individuals making up to \$75,000 and couples filing jointly making up to \$150,000.
- After that, the money starts to be phased out at intervals of \$50 per every \$1,000 of adjusted gross income.
- Those making up to \$200,000 individually and \$400,000 as a couple would still be eligible for the \$2,000 tax credit that existed before the passage of the COVID relief bill.
- [Here is a calculator that can tell parents what they can expect to receive](#)

Additionally, with maximum SNAP benefits, the \$1,400 direct stimulus payment checks, the Child Tax Credit, and some other items in the bill, experts believe that these actions will cut the Child Poverty Rate in half.



Two action items for you here -

The Texas Human Services Committee will be hearing these two bills next week.

Before you close out your week!

We would like you to register comment on one or both of these bills here

CLICK

<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c310>

1) **HB 1019** Support Senior SNAP Simplification Bill - **Support**

- Several factors contribute to Texas' low SNAP participation rate among seniors, including difficulties navigating the application process, limited mobility and access to technology, and lack of awareness or knowledge of the program.
- While most Texans apply for SNAP benefits via an online portal, the process can be daunting for seniors.
- Implementing a simplified application process a household composed solely of seniors and/or persons with a disability with no earned income can be certified for 36 months using a shortened application form with limited documentation requirements.
- Using data matching with Medicaid will identify seniors that are eligible but not enrolled in SNAP. Data matching conducted by the state would enable community partners to better identify and assist seniors on Medicaid in applying for SNAP.

2) **HB 343** Not allowing the purchase of certain food and drink items under SNAP - **Oppose**

- The state should not restrict food choices and infringe upon the autonomy of SNAP recipients, unfairly singling them out
- Restricting SNAP purchases creates an unfunded mandate (making a rule that will cost money to follow, without providing that money) on businesses.
 - Retraining cashiers
 - Recreating signage
 - Reprogramming computers
 - Retrieving errors
- It is an overstep of government reach to tell families what they can and cannot buy for themselves at their local grocery store

Hope you all have a great weekend and thank you for helping North Texas Families

Questions? Comments? Hit Reply!

[Is this necessary? No. But it's satisfying.](#)

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No longer want to receive these emails, no biggie, hit reply and I'll wave bye