

NTFB VOICE

# Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS



## January 2025 Edition

### State News

The 89<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature convened on January 14, 2025. State Representative Dustin Burrows, HD 83 from Lubbock, was elected Speaker of the House. The North Texas Food Bank, Feeding Texas, and the Texas Food Policy Roundtable have produced and will support a number of legislative priorities. A briefing was held to inform the staff from the House and Senate members in Austin on the details of these priorities.

### REDUCE HUNGER & IMPROVE NUTRITION

Texas has the second-highest rate of food insecurity in the nation. To increase access to food and improve health outcomes, the Texas Legislature should:

#### Streamline SNAP 6-Mo Eligibility Checks



6-month periodic reporting is a proven tool to reduce workload and administrative costs, enhance program integrity, and systemically fix our state's current backlog of SNAP applications.

#### Implement Summer EBT



1 in 4 Texas children experience hunger, which spikes in the summer because millions of children lose access to school meals. Summer EBT is a new program that would provide low-income families with children \$120 in food benefits during the summer.

#### Improve Health Outcomes with Nutritious Food



Food-insecure Medicaid beneficiaries are more likely to develop diet-related illnesses. A streamlined Medicaid reimbursement model that integrates food bank services into our healthcare system would enable doctors to prescribe healthy food, improve health outcomes, and reduce state healthcare costs.

#### Modernize the Eligibility System



System errors and glitches within TIERS, the system that underpins SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF, have led to application processing delays and wrongful denials. We support fully funding HHSC's LAR Exceptional Item Request #2 to permanently fix these problems.

## Virtual Action Days

Throughout the session, which ends on June 2, there will be virtual advocacy days, and hope you will participate. The first is scheduled for **Wednesday, January 29**, and will be for Summer EBT, the new program that would provide low-income families with children with \$120 in food benefits during the summer, when children do not have access to free meals at school. [Ask your legislators to support Summer EBT.](#)



## Future Virtual Action Days

**Tuesday, February 11 - TIERS Modernization & 2-1-1 Advocacy Day**

**Wednesday, March 5 - [Food is Medicine Virtual Advocacy Day](#)**

**Wednesday, March 26 - [SNAP Automated 6 Month Virtual Advocacy Day](#)**

**Wednesday, April 16 - Root Cause Virtual Advocacy Day**

Look for NTFB emails with more information on how to take action close to the date of the virtual advocacy day.

## NTFB News

NTFB partnered with The Senior Source to highlight the needs of seniors and older adults in North Texas as lawmakers prepared for the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature.

Older adults are now the fastest-growing age demographic in Texas, and in the Dallas area alone, this segment of our population is increasing at five times the rate of any other age group. By 2030, nearly one in five Texans will be 65 or older. This growth warrants attention in the 89<sup>th</sup> State Legislative Session and requires public policymakers to be intentional in their action, as we all deserve to age with dignity in a state with protections and resources in place for older adults.

To highlight the importance of issues impacting seniors, North Texas Food Bank joined The Senior Source, Dallas Area Gerontology Society, Secure Our Seniors' Safety, Alzheimer's Association and Visiting Nurse Association for a State Legislative Forum in December meant to inform legislators and their staff about the issues important to older adults and the people who care for them.

When it comes to hunger, Texas has the third-highest number of food-insecure seniors in the country, behind California and Florida, with an estimated 546,800 people who are 60 and older facing hunger. Among older adults, or those older than 50, Texas ranks No. 1 in hunger. When those groups are combined, it means more than 1 million older adults in Texas don't know where their next meal will come from.

NTFB addresses this through its Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) box distribution, run in partnership with the USDA, as well as through its partner pantries. Through these programs, NTFB provided access to 14 million physical meals during the last fiscal year, including more than 7,300 CSFP boxes per month.

NTFB looks forward to the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature and to working with lawmakers to champion policies that support hunger relief for seniors, children, and families across the state.

## **Federal News**

On December 20, 2024, the U.S. House and Senate passed a continuing resolution to extend federal spending and avert a government shutdown through March 14, 2025. Included in this continuing resolution is a year-long extension of the 2018 Farm Bill through September 30, 2025, and \$10 billion in economic assistance for agricultural producers facing hardship due to rising input costs and decreasing prices.

The 119<sup>th</sup> Congress convened on January 3, 2025, during the final days of President Joe Biden's administration. President Donald Trump was sworn in on January 20, 2025. After the 2024 election, the Republicans retained their majority in the House of Representatives by a slim majority and won the Senate majority.

2025 is promising to be a very busy year!

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