



For Immediate Release

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PROPOSED FEDERAL CUTS WOULD SAP SNAP OF PROVEN ABILITY TO HELP POOR, HUNGRY TEXANS

With second-highest rate of families facing food hardship in the country, Texas kids and families would shoulder nearly 10 percent of proposed \$127 billion cuts over next 10 years

(AUSTIN, Texas) — With one or more U. S. House-passed, budget-cutting proposals expected on the Senate floor for debate this week, the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPPP) and the Texas Food Bank Network (TFBN) say that the cuts proposed to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) would weaken the program's proven ability to help poor and hungry Texas kids and families.

"Texas has the second highest rate of families facing food hardship in the country with one-in-five of our families struggling to afford food," says CPPPP Senior Policy Analyst Celia Cole. "Children are at the highest risk of hunger with one-in-four Texas kids living in a home without enough food."

Among other budget-cutting measures, the Senate is considering a proposal in the fiscal 2012 budget plan passed by the House in April to cut SNAP by \$127 billion—almost 20 percent—over the next ten years (2012-2021). Texas kids and families would shoulder 9.6 percent of those proposed cuts.

The House-passed proposal would convert SNAP to a fixed pot of money that doesn't grow with need (commonly referred to as a block grant), cap federal funding for the program, and weaken or repeal the program's national standards. According to Cole, this could mean thousands of the 3.5 million low-income Texans participating in SNAP would be thrown off the rolls or see their benefits slashed by thousands of dollars year, or combination of the two.

For example, all families of four—including the poorest—would see their benefits cut by \$147 a month in fiscal 2012, or \$1,764 on an annual basis. All families of three would be subject to cuts of \$116 per month, or \$1,392 on an annual basis.

And as some advocates worry, fewer benefits could mean fewer nutritious meals.

"Currently research shows us that SNAP benefits already run out before the end of the month," says the TFBN State Policy Director J.C. Dwyer. "These cuts would make it impossible for families to purchase enough healthy food for a nutritious diet."

Dwyer also says such deep SNAP cuts would likely cause more families to fall into poverty as currently the program helps lessen the extent and severity of poverty. Census Bureau data show that SNAP lifted 4.6 million Americans above the poverty line in 2009, including 2.1 million children and 200,000 seniors.

“The SNAP proposal would roll back benefits for the neediest Texans in the wake of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression,” adds Cole. “A block grant structure would make it impossible for SNAP to meet rising need during bad economic times.”

From the beginning of the recession in Texas in August 2008 to May 2011, the SNAP caseload increased 45 percent as Texas families struggled to weather the Great Recession.

Cole and Dwyer point out that these cuts would not occur in isolation. Both say nearly two-thirds of the House budget cuts over the next ten years would come from programs that serve low-income people. This would mean many vulnerable families would lose health coverage, housing assistance, and other important supports such as child care at the same time that their SNAP benefits are deeply cut.

“It is critically important that Sens. Hutchison and Cornyn hear from Texans that we oppose any efforts to structurally change or cut SNAP,” says Dwyer. “Such proposals would only serve to weaken the program’s proven ability to help the poorest and hungriest of among us.”

Facts about SNAP

- Nationally, SNAP currently aids over 44 million people in over 20 million low-income households.
- In Texas, almost 3.5 million people in 1.4 million households participate in SNAP.
- About half of the households on SNAP are family households with children, and a majority of these family households are families headed by single mothers.
- Three-quarters of SNAP participants are children, seniors or persons with disabilities.

To arrange an interview with CPPP Senior Policy Analyst Celia Cole or the TFBN State Policy Director J.C. Dwyer, please contact Brian Stephens at 512.320.0222, ext. 112 or stephens@cphp.org

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About CPPP

The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans. Learn more at www.cphp.org.

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About TFBN

Texas Food Bank Network (TFBN) was founded in 1986 as an outgrowth of an attempt by a food retailers trade association to conduct a statewide food drive.

Over time, TFBN has become a single effective voice uniting food banks affiliated with Feeding America in Texas, fostering and facilitating cooperation between food banks themselves as well as food banks and statewide resources; particularly state government.

The Network is made up of 19 member Food Banks that serve all of Texas through 3600 agencies.
