

House Committee Farm Bill Would Cost Missouri, Harm Families

The U.S. Congress is considering proposals that would make food assistance more difficult to access, and could take food off the tables of 131,000 Missourians and their families.¹ These punitive policies, including harsh work requirements, would cost Missouri millions, and put families at risk of losing access to nutritional food.

Across the state, far too many Missourians are struggling to put food on the table. Hunger has increased dramatically in Missouri over the past decade, faster than in any other state in the nation. In 2016, nearly 500,000 Missourians lived in households experiencing hunger.²

In the last year, SNAP:

- Helped over 750,000 Missourians in 350,000 households stretch their budgets to afford a basic diet.
- The average monthly benefit in Missouri is \$264.62 per household and \$122.57 per person, or only around \$1.36 per meal.³

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as Food Stamps, is our nation's most effective tool to combat this need.

Though a modest benefit, the SNAP program is very effective at improving nutrition, resulting in improved health outcomes and lower health care costs, particularly for children.⁴

SNAP is authorized through the Farm Bill, which is due to be reauthorized.

Unfortunately, the House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill imposes harsher work requirements that fail to account for the realities of Missourians who utilize SNAP, and would do little to help families become economically independent.

The limited exemptions included in the bill, will not protect families with children, seniors and Missourians with a disability from the harmful impacts of lost benefits.



Most healthy-working age Missourians who utilize SNAP are working in low-wage occupations that do not provide regular hours or benefits like sick leave.



More punitive work requirements would not account for periods when workers' hours temporarily fall below 20 hours a week due to layoffs, seasonal employment, illness or when a worker is caring for a sick school age child or parent.



Benefit sanctions for one family member would reduce the total amount of support for the entire family, resulting in reduced nutritional assistance for children, seniors, and Missourians with disabilities.

Under the House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill proposal:⁵

- Adults age 18-59 who are not disabled or raising a child under age 6 would be required to prove they have worked at least 20 hours per week.
- If the individuals fail to meet the new requirements, they would face a "sanction" resulting in the loss of their SNAP assistance for a full 12 months.
- **Missouri would be required to offer job training and education services which would cost the state 15 times the estimated \$17.8 million in federal dollars Missouri would receive to pay for those services.**^{6,7}

At the same time the proposal would waste taxpayer dollars on poorly-designed, under-funded employment services instead of providing robust education and training programs.

Federal funding provided would largely be spent on a system to track employment and training hours and would provide little support beyond the most basic services such as access to computers, copiers, or other job search materials.⁸

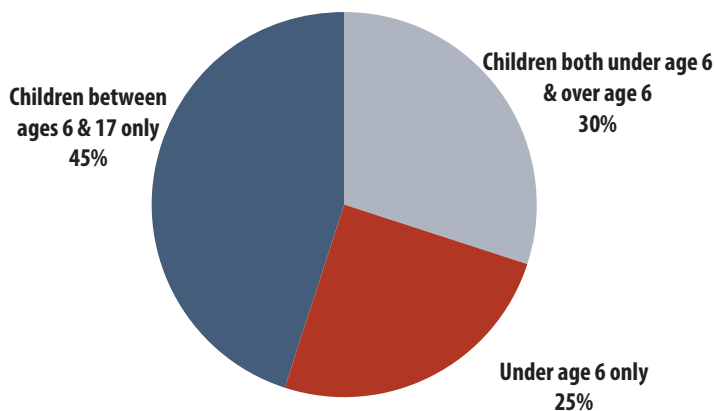
The cost of any additional services (such as training tied to in demand occupations or any individualized services) would be shouldered entirely by the state.

Nearly 1 in 8 Missourians Benefit from SNAP

The vast majority of SNAP participants live with children, seniors, or persons with disability.⁹ While participants in these categories would be exempt from work requirements, a loss in benefits by a family member who is not exempt would cut the entire households' food budget. Alternately, if the household is compliant, work requirements could result in the loss of a primary caregiver.

Of Missouri's SNAP families with children, nearly half are in households that would not be exempt from work requirements.

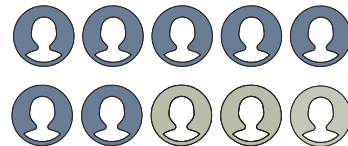
Most Families with Children Would Not Be Exempt From Work Requirements



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2011-2016.

Most SNAP Participants Live in Families with Children, Seniors, or People with Disabilities

Over 70% are in families with children



More than 1 in 3 are in families with seniors or people with disabilities



Parents with only school age children (age 6 and older) would be subject to strict work requirements. These families would face increased challenges and costs associated with addressing child care needs, particularly during school holidays and the summer.

Most SNAP Participants Who Can Work Are Already Working

Most SNAP households that can work, do work:¹⁰

- 56% of Missouri families that utilize SNAP include at least one member who has worked in the past year
- An additional 33% of households contain no healthy working age adults.

Missouri Workers in Many Low-Wage Occupations Rely on Food Assistance to Make Ends Meet

Proportion of Missouri Workers in These Occupations that Live in SNAP Households



Nearly 1 in 3 nursing, psychiatric, & home health aides



More than 1 in 4 cashiers



Nearly 1 in 4 workers in food preparation & serving occupations



More than 1 in 5 workers in building & grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations

Unfortunately, many of these workers are in low wage occupations with irregular schedules that provide few opportunities for paid leave. These workers utilize SNAP to supplement low pay or rely on SNAP during short periods of joblessness often related to temporary health issues, caregiving responsibilities, or the seasonal nature of their work.¹¹

Harsh work requirements would cut benefits to working households whose hours temporarily fall below 20 hours per week or who are forced to leave work due to illness or to care for an aging parent or sick child.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2011-2016.

Older Workers Face Obstacles to Employment But Are Not Exempt

Over 1 in 4 SNAP households contain at least one member who is over age 50, but under age 60 (at which point recipients are exempt from work requirements).¹² For the first time, SNAP participants in this age group would be subject to strict work requirements. Over 100,000 Missourians between ages 50-59 live in SNAP households and many experience substantial barriers to employment including gaps in education and skills or age discrimination by employers. Once unemployed over half of workers 50+ remain unemployed for at least 27 weeks, a rate substantially higher than among younger workers.¹³

NOTES

1. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Chairman Conaway’s Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship,” April 18, 2018
2. Anne Cafer, Darren Chapman, Kathlee Freeman, and Sandy Rikoon. “Missouri Hunger Atlas 2016” MU Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security
3. SNAP Monthly State Participation and Benefit Summary - Public Data, Fiscal Year 2017.
4. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “SNAP Is Linked with Improved Nutritional Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs”, January, 2018
5. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Chairman Conaway’s Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship”, April, 2018
6. LaDonna Pavetti, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Farm Bill Funding for Work Programs Won’t Buy Much” April, 2018
7. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Chairman Conaway’s Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship,” April, 2018
8. LaDonna Pavetti, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Farm Bill Funding for Work Programs Won’t Buy Much” April, 2018
9. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Missouri Food Stamp Program”, March, 2018
10. U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2011-2016
11. Brynne Keith-Jennings and Raheem Chaudhry. “Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs”, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March, 2018
12. U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2011-2016
13. Sara E. Rix. “Long-Term Unemployment: Greater Risks and Consequences for Older Workers”, AARP Public Policy Institute, February, 2015.