



Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

Chairman Burke

Vice Chair Beagle

Ranking Member Tavares

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Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 50

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for hearing my interested party testimony today on House Bill 50. My name is Brie Lusheck and I am a Policy Associate at The Center for Community Solutions, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to improve health, social and economic conditions through research, policy analysis and communication. One of Community Solutions' policy priorities is strengthening the health and human services safety net, of which the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, plays a vital role. Community Solutions offers testimony today to highlight the importance of SNAP for Ohioans of all ages and how it should be made more accessible by all who are eligible.

Community Solutions appreciates Representative Schaffer's attention to this issue, as well as the work that Auditor Yost did in his examination of SNAP and proposed measures around program integrity. This work ensures that those who are eligible can access the program. As has been discussed, the addition of a photo to SNAP cards was not included in the report's overall recommendations. We look forward to the opportunity to have further conversations around implementation of the proposed recommendations from the *Auditor's Report on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*.

SNAP is critically important for families. In 2015, SNAP removed 8.4 million people of all ages from poverty, and the number of children in poverty fell by 28 percent due to SNAP benefits.¹ SNAP helps to increase a child's intake of key vitamins for development and can reduce the risk of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes later in life.² In 2011, researchers found that SNAP decreased the risk of having babies who weigh too little, a health outcome that impacts infant mortality.³ This positions SNAP as an early investment in the long-term health of children.

¹ Urban Institute

² Food Research and Action Center

³ <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/5/23/15675892/food-stamps-snap-evidence-health-poverty-hunger>

SNAP also plays an important role in reducing senior hunger and improving senior health. Research has shown that older adults enrolled in Medicaid, who also receive SNAP, are less likely to be hospitalized or admitted to a nursing home, significantly reducing health care spending and helping older adults age in place. However, our research found that 60 percent of older Ohioans who are eligible for SNAP are not enrolled in the program.⁴

To this end, more emphasis should be placed on outreach to populations who could benefit from SNAP, but are not enrolled. There are opportunities for Ohio to put policies in place that will make SNAP more accessible to older adults, thus improving their access to nutritious foods. These include:

- Expanding the use of phone-based enrollment for SNAP, so that older adults with mobility and/or technology limitations can more easily access the program
- Adoption by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services of the Elderly Simplified Application Project and Standard Medical Deduction, both of which simplify the enrollment and recertification processes for senior-only households
- Targeted outreach to older adults who are eligible for SNAP to increase awareness of its availability

Additionally, SNAP is important to the economy and is interconnected with agriculture. Every \$5 of SNAP generates up to \$9 in economic activity.⁵ For every \$1 billion worth of retail food demand from SNAP recipients, 3,300 farm jobs are generated.⁶ Agriculture is Ohio's number one industry, adding \$98 billion a year to Ohio's economy.⁷

Community Solutions values the opportunity to further develop the discussion around House Bill 50. It is important to consider the program as a whole when weighing decisions that could impact access. Households across every district in Ohio rely on SNAP to provide nutrition to their families.⁸ We would welcome the chance to share additional research that we have conducted in this policy space, and are happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

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⁴ <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/ohio-seniors-missing-out-on-50-million-in-hunger-aid/>

⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and U.S. Department of Agriculture

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture

⁷ Ohio Livestock Coalition

⁸ <https://www.communitysolutions.com/resources/community-fact-sheets/ohio-legislative-districts/>