



SNAP Works: A Pathway out of Poverty for Arizonans

Executive Summary

Poverty, work, and hunger are inextricably linked.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—a federal program that provides support for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and working families to purchase food—has consistently produced measurable impacts in mitigating hunger and poverty as a work support that allows underemployed, temporarily unemployed, and low-wage workers to put food on the table.

In Arizona, SNAP helps nearly 850,000 people facing hunger each month. Roughly 54% are children, 11% are older adults, and 10% are people with a disability. “Work eligible” adults also receive SNAP, and more than half of them work at least 20 hours each week. The average monthly benefit in Arizona is \$117, or roughly \$1.30 per meal. People who participate in SNAP are at risk of losing food access due to an under-researched approach to restructuring the program outlined in the House Farm Bill (H.R. 2). Among other concerning changes explained in this policy brief, the nutrition title of H.R. 2 threatens to take away people’s access to food if they do not consistently meet heightened work requirements. The Senate Farm Bill (S. 3042), on the other hand, maintains SNAP’s current work require-

ments and strengthens the program. As of June 28, both bills have passed their respective chambers and will be reconciled in conference committee negotiations; the compromise bill must then pass each chamber again before heading to the president’s desk.

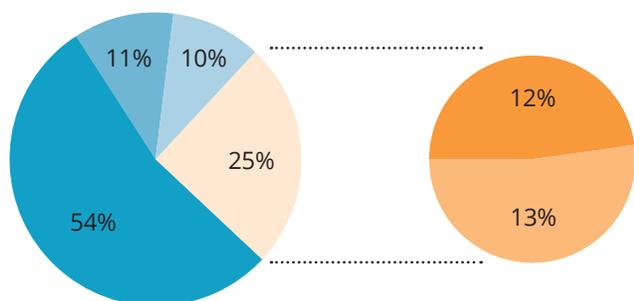
Creating strong attachment to the workforce for low-income individuals that allows them to earn a living wage is an inherently positive step forward. However, a sustainable solution requires more than simply mandated work without a clear understanding of needed supports and impacts.

SNAP Is at Risk: 2018 Farm Bill

SNAP is the most comprehensive and effective nutrition assistance program in the country. It has been proven to lift people out of poverty, improve health outcomes (especially for children and seniors), and have a positive impact on the economy.

SNAP has always supported work. Unlike other public benefits that terminate once the income threshold is met by the participant, SNAP is a market-driven policy that encourages work by slowly decreasing the benefit amount as income increases. In doing so, SNAP incen-

SNAP Participation in Arizona (March 2018)



In March 2018, **54%** of SNAP participants in Arizona were children.

Children
452,952

Seniors
92,968

People with a disability
85,568

Working 20+ hours/week
113,893

Working <20 hours/week
or exempt from work
103,868

CHANGES TO SNAP ELIGIBILITY PROPOSED IN 2018 FARM BILL

Current Law	House Proposal (H.R. 2)	Senate Proposal (S. 3042)
<i>Individuals 18–49 years old, not caring for dependents, must work, participate in work training, or volunteer for at least 20 hours per week to receive SNAP benefits.</i>	<i>Individuals 18–59 years old, including parents of children 6+ years old, must work or participate in work training for at least 20 hours per week to receive SNAP benefits.</i>	<i>Maintains current law.</i>
<i>Benefits are limited to 3 months (in 36 months) if not work-compliant. Sanction results in loss of benefits for 1 month on the first offense and 3 months on the second offense.</i>	<i>Benefits are limited to 1 month (in 12 months) if not work-compliant. Sanction results in loss of benefits for 12 months on the first offense and 36 months on the second offense.</i>	<i>Maintains current law.</i>

tivizes people to enter the labor market and to increase their work hours.

The Farm Bill governs many agricultural and food programs, including SNAP, and has to be renewed by September 30, 2018. Eligibility changes in the U.S. House of Representatives' version of the 2018 Farm Bill would impact SNAP's existing work and work-reporting requirements. It would also drastically increase penalties for noncompliance.

The Senate's version of the 2018 Farm Bill, however, maintains SNAP's current work requirements, reduces fraud through more reliable methods, and strengthens the program overall.

Recommendations & Action

Both work and SNAP demonstrably move individuals and families out of poverty. The key to successful SNAP programmatic changes is determining how these two tools can be deployed most effectively together. While a large number of SNAP participants are already working, to truly support economic independence employment programs should be designed with participants' unique barriers in mind.

- 1. Focus programs on sustainable employment and self-sufficiency.** Work supports in the House Farm Bill are underfunded and lack the necessary infrastructure to support large-scale employment.
- 2. Wait for evaluation of SNAP E&T pilots (expected in 2020) to adapt programs accordingly.** Changes to SNAP must be data-driven and address participants' employment barriers and education needs.
- 3. Maintain state flexibility to administer SNAP.** State-level discretion in administering SNAP allows those with the most direct knowledge of state needs to ensure the program is operating effectively.

For More Information

Please find our full policy brief here:
www.bit.ly/SNAPworks2018

For questions, contact Ashley St. Thomas at
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Approximately **290,000 people** in Arizona could be subject to the work requirements proposed in H.R. 2 to continue participating in SNAP. The Department of Economic Security estimates that, on average, **only 125 SNAP E&T participants per month currently obtain employment.** The infrastructure is insufficient to support this increase.