



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
**Representative Genevieve Mina**  
Member, House Health and Social Services Committee  
Member, House Transportation Committee  
*Serving House District 19: Airport Heights, Mountain View, & Russian Jack*

**To:** Co-Chair Neal Foster  
Co-Chair Bryce Edgmon  
Co-Chair DeLena Johnson  
**From:** Representative Genevieve Mina  
**Date:** March 6, 2024  
**RE:** House Finance Committee Bill Hearing Request for HB 196

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Dear Co-Chairs Foster, Edgmon, and Johnson,

I respectfully request that you schedule HB 196 on Food Stamp Program Eligibility for consideration in the House Finance Committee. This legislation would accept a federal flexibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that expands eligibility parameters. In this packet I have included:

1. HB 196, Version A - Sponsor Statement
2. HB 196, Version A
3. HB 196, Version A - Sectional Analysis
4. HB 196, Fiscal Note DOH-QC
5. HB 196, Fiscal Note DOG-PAFS
6. HB 196, Presentation
7. HB 196, Letters of Support
8. HB 196, Supporting Documents

For more information, please feel free to contact my staff, Katy Giorgio at 907-465-4926 or [katy.giorgio@akleg.gov](mailto:katy.giorgio@akleg.gov).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Genevieve Mina".

Representative Genevieve Mina

**Session:** State Capitol Room 420 • Juneau, AK 99801-1182 • (907) 465-3424  
**Interim:** 1500 W. Benson Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99503

*Rep.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov*



# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

# Representative Genevieve Mina

Member, House Health and Social Services Committee

Member, House Transportation Committee

*Serving House District 19: Airport Heights, Mountain View, & Russian Jack*

## HB 196 Sponsor Statement

*"An Act relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program; and providing for an effective date."*

In Alaska, too many working families and seniors are forced to choose between paying bills or putting food on the table. Food pantries are seeing unprecedented levels of demand while the cost of living increases. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the state's most effective tool to combat hunger for low-income households, feeding one in eight Alaskans. However, Alaska SNAP recipients nearing the upper income limit risk losing more in benefits than they would earn if they accepted a modest increase in income or savings, resulting in a "benefits cliff." The current system fosters dependence on the program while penalizing economic independence and financial stability.

One strategy to enhance SNAP's effectiveness and efficiency is by implementing broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) – a federal flexibility that has been adopted in 42 states and two territories. BBCE mitigates the cliff effect by modifying SNAP's income and asset requirements. First, it allows the state to increase SNAP's income limit from 130% to 200% of the Alaska poverty standard. Second, it allows the state to waive SNAP's asset test. BBCE allows states to phase down benefits for working families as their income rises. Additionally, SNAP is an economic driver for groceries and rural community, and every dollar invested in SNAP has been shown to yield \$1.70 in economic activity.

BBCE also decreases the administrative burden with the potential for cost savings for the state. Asset verifications are time-consuming and error prone. Removing the asset test reduces staff time needed to process applications. The time for this transformative change is now, and it aligns with ongoing efforts to modernize the SNAP process and address pressing challenges facing Alaskans.

Food is not merely about satisfying hunger; food is medicine. Access to nutritious food is a vital component of the social determinants of health, helping children go to school and families go to work. The implementation of BBCE for SNAP in Alaska is an urgent and necessary step towards alleviating the burden on food banks, reducing government bureaucracy, enhancing food security, and promoting self-sufficiency.

**Session: State Capitol Room 420 • Juneau, AK 99801-1182 • (907) 465-3424**

**Interim: 1500 W. Benson Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99503**

*Rep.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov*

**HOUSE BILL NO. 196**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES MINA, Groh, Dibert, Story, Hannan, Himschoot, Foster, Wright, Edgmon, McCormick, Gray, Sumner

Introduced: 5/8/23

Referred: Health and Social Services, Finance

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1   **"An Act relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program; and providing for**  
2   **an effective date."**

3   **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4   **\* Section 1. AS 47.25.980(a) is amended to read:**

5                   (a) The department shall

6                   (1) adopt regulations necessary to carry out the food stamp program;  
7                   (2) cooperate with the federal government and do all things necessary  
8                   to continue state eligibility under the food stamp program;

9                   (3) comply with the requirements of 7 U.S.C. 2011 - 2036d  
10                   (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), implement categorical eligibility  
11                   under 7 U.S.C. 2014(a), and make eligible an individual whose household income  
12                   is not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline regardless of the  
13                   value of assets owned by the household [7 U.S.C. 2011 - 2036 (FOOD STAMP  
14                   PROGRAM)];

(4) establish an electronic application for the food stamp program and allow an applicant to submit an application in electronic format or in other formats required by state and federal law; the electronic application must inform an applicant that a false statement made on the application will be investigated and is punishable under AS 11.56.210; in this paragraph, "electronic application" means an application for benefits or renewal of benefits, whether the department exclusively administers the benefits or administers the benefits in coordination with another state agency or federal agency, electronically completed and submitted through the department's Internet website.

10       \* **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
11       read:

12           TRANSITION: REGULATIONS. The Department of Health may adopt regulations  
13 necessary to implement the changes made by this Act. The regulations take effect under  
14 AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), but not before the effective date of the law  
15 implemented by the regulation.

16 \* Sec. 3. Section 2 of this Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

17 \* Sec. 4. Except as provided in sec. 3 of this Act, this Act takes effect July 1, 2025.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
**Representative Genevieve Mina**  
Member, House Health and Social Services Committee  
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**HB 196 Sectional Analysis**

*"An Act relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program; and providing for an effective date."*

**Section 1. Amends AS. 47.25.980(a)(3):**

This section updates the reference to the chapter of United States code governing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This section also increases the household income limits for the SNAP program from 130% to 200% of the Alaska poverty standard and eliminates the household asset test.

**Section 2. Amends uncodified law by adding a new section:**

This section provides the authority for the Department of Health to adopt the necessary regulations to implement this Act.

**Section 3. Provides for an effective date for Section 2:**

Section 2 has an immediate effective date.

**Section 4. Provides for an effective date.**

Except as provided in sec. 3, the effective date of this Act is July 1, 2025.

**Session:** State Capitol Room 420 • Juneau, AK 99801-1182 • (907) 465-3424  
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*Rep.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov*

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2024 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 196  
Fiscal Note Number:  
() Publish Date:

Identifier: HB196-DOH-QC-02-20-24  
Title: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY  
Sponsor: MINA  
Requester: (H) HSS  
Department: Department of Health  
Appropriation: Public Assistance  
Allocation: Quality Control  
OMB Component Number: 234

## Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2025 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2025 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Personal Services	123.6		123.6	123.6	123.6	123.6	123.6
Travel							
Services	14.0		14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Commodities	4.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>141.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>

## Fund Source (Operating Only)

1002 Fed Rcpts (Fed)	70.8		69.3	69.3	69.3	69.3	69.3
1003 GF/Match (UGF)	70.8		69.3	69.3	69.3	69.3	69.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>141.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>	<b>138.6</b>

## Positions

Full-time	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Part-time							
Temporary							

## Change in Revenues

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>						

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2024) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2025) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No

*(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

## ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 07/01/25

## Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Corrected an error in calculating the personal services and commodities.

Prepared By: Leslie Brewer, Administrative Operations Manager 2  
Division: Public Assistance  
Approved By: Josephine Stern, Assistant Commissioner  
Agency: Department of Health

Phone: (907)500-3306  
Date: 02/20/2024  
Date: 02/20/24

## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB196

### Analysis

This bill mandates the Division of Public Assistance to execute Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Division of Public Assistance will still need to assess a household's size, income, compliance with work requirements, and other applicable eligibility requirements to determine eligibility for SNAP benefits. Households must complete a SNAP application, have an interview, provide financial documents, report changes, and reapply regularly, just like all other SNAP households.

To effectuate this change, the division will need to enact policy amendments, revising the SNAP state plan and regulations. Furthermore, it necessitates modifications within databases, the implementation of quality oversight measures, and the provision of staff training.

The division estimates this transition will require the allocation of one full time position for policy and training within the Field Services component (costs reflected in accompanying fiscal note) and an additional full time position specifically for oversight and quality control within the Quality Control component (costs reflected in this fiscal note).

Costs related to this fiscal note include:

Personal Services: Eligibility Quality Control Technician 2, range 18, step D in Anchorage \$123.6

Cores Services: \$14.0

Commodities: \$40. initial year and \$1.0 for following years.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2024 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 196  
Fiscal Note Number:  
() Publish Date:

Identifier: HB196-DOH-PAFS-02-20-2024  
Title: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY  
Sponsor: MINA  
Requester: (H) HSS

Department: Department of Health  
Appropriation: Public Assistance  
Allocation: Public Assistance Field Services  
OMB Component Number: 236

## Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2025 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2025 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
OPERATING EXPENDITURES							
Personal Services	120.1		120.1	120.1	120.1	120.1	120.1
Travel							
Services	14.0		14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Commodities	4.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>138.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>

## Fund Source (Operating Only)

1002 Fed Rcpts (Fed)	69.0		67.5	67.5	67.5	67.5	67.5
1003 GF/Match (UGF)	69.1		67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>138.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>	<b>135.1</b>

## Positions

Full-time	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Part-time							
Temporary							

## Change in Revenues

None							
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**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2024) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

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**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No

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## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB196

### Analysis

This bill mandates the Division of Public Assistance to execute Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Division of Public Assistance will still need to assess a household's size, income, compliance with work requirements, and other applicable eligibility requirements to determine eligibility for SNAP benefits. Households must complete a SNAP application, have an interview, provide financial documents, report changes, and reapply regularly, just like all other SNAP households.

To effectuate this change, the division will need to enact policy amendments, revising the SNAP state plan and regulations. Furthermore, it necessitates modifications within databases, the implementation of quality oversight measures, and the provision of staff training.

The division estimates this transition will require the allocation of one full time position for policy and training within the Field Services component (costs reflected in this fiscal note) and an additional full time position specifically for oversight and quality control within the Quality Control component (costs reflected in accompanying fiscal note).

Costs related to this fiscal note include:

Personal Services: Training Specialist 2, range 18, step C in Anchorage \$120.1

Core Services: \$14.0

Commodities: \$4.0 initial year and \$1.0 for following years

# HB 196

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## **BROAD-BASED CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY**

Representative Genevieve Mina  
House District 19 - Airport Heights, Mountain View, Russian Jack

# SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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SNAP provides essential support to millions of eligible low-income individuals and families, facilitating access to nutritious food. 1 in 8 Alaskans utilize this benefit.

SNAP benefits are **100% funded by federal dollars** via Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Individual states and territories are mandated to participate in SNAP, but each jurisdiction has the flexibility to administer their programs for their specific needs within certain FNS guidelines. The Division of Public Assistance administers Alaska's SNAP program.

# SNAP PROGRAM HISTORY

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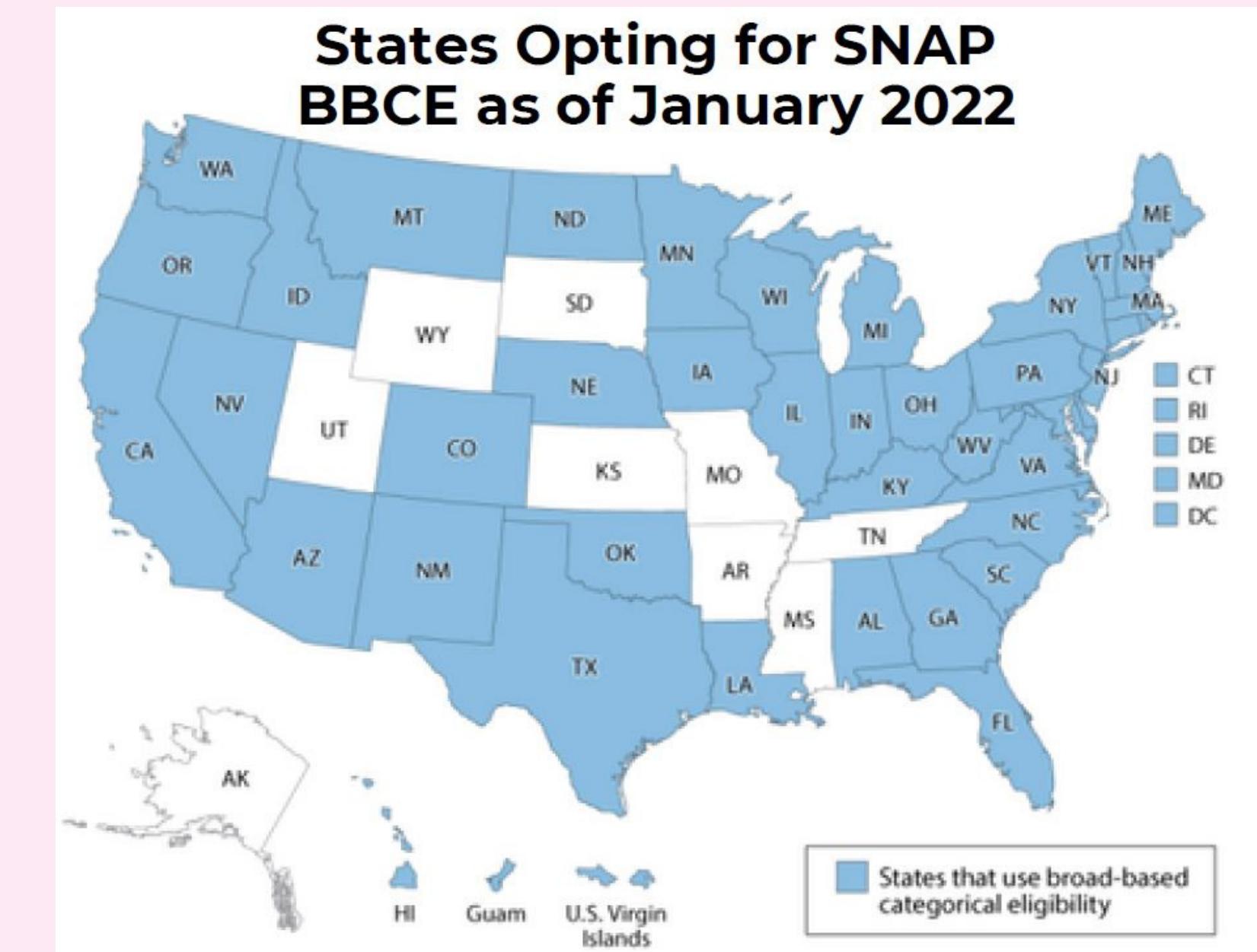
<i>Food Stamp Origins</i>	<i>Alaska joins Food Stamp Program</i>	<i>Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act</i>	<i>BBCE for Food Stamps</i>	<i>Rebranding as SNAP</i>
<b>1939-1964</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2008</b>
Food stamps were first established during the Great Depression to provide food assistance to those in need while disposing of surplus agricultural production.	Part of a nationwide rollout, Alaska adopted the Food Stamp Program in October 1972.	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was introduced as part of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA).	A USDA rule change allowed states to apply broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) as another method of assessing food stamp eligibility.	The 2008 Farm Bill renamed food stamps as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to reflect its focus on nutrition and expanding eligibility to a broader range of low-income individuals and families.

# BROAD-BASED CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

Optional flexibility available to states since 1999, and 42 states and 2 territories have adopted BBCE.

BBCE would allow DOH to change two major SNAP eligibility requirements:

- Increase the income limit from 130% to 200% of Alaska Poverty Level
- Eliminate the asset test\*



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [cbpp.org](http://cbpp.org)

\*Currently, households cannot have assets (including cash in the bank exceeding \$2,250 or \$3,500 for households with at least one elderly or disabled family member.

# BROAD-BASED CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

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## Softens the “benefit cliff” as earnings rise

SNAP supports work in part by phasing benefits down gradually by 24 to 36 cents for each dollar of increased earnings. A family can lose all their SNAP benefits from a small earnings increase that raises its gross income over SNAP’s eligibility threshold.

## Lets low-income households save for the future

Having modest savings and assets enables low-income families to escape poverty by avoiding debt, weathering unexpected financial disruptions, and better preparing to support themselves in retirement. Under regular federal SNAP rules, countable assets cannot exceed \$2,250 for most households; BBCE lets states eliminate those limits for SNAP.

## Simplifies SNAP administration

BBCE reduces the application processing complexity by eliminating the asset test, saving roughly **90 minutes** per application.

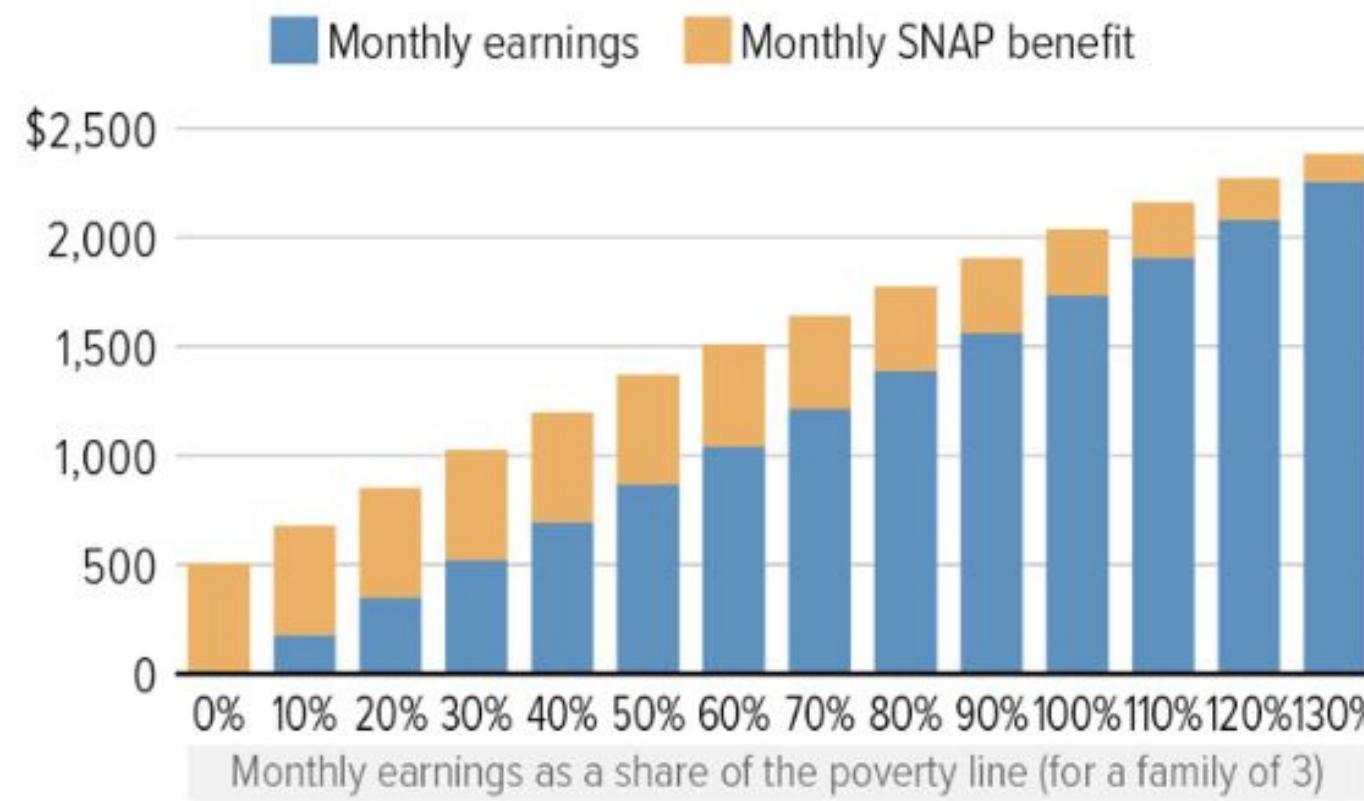
**Moreover, BBCE does not contribute substantially to SNAP costs.** According to the Congressional Budget Office, only about 4 percent of SNAP program costs (and about 8 percent of SNAP participation) are due to BBCE.

Source: Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, “SNAP’s “Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility” Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future.” July 2019.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snaps-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-supports-working-families-and-ftn4>

# BROAD-BASED CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

## SNAP Benefits Gradually Phase Out as Earnings Rise

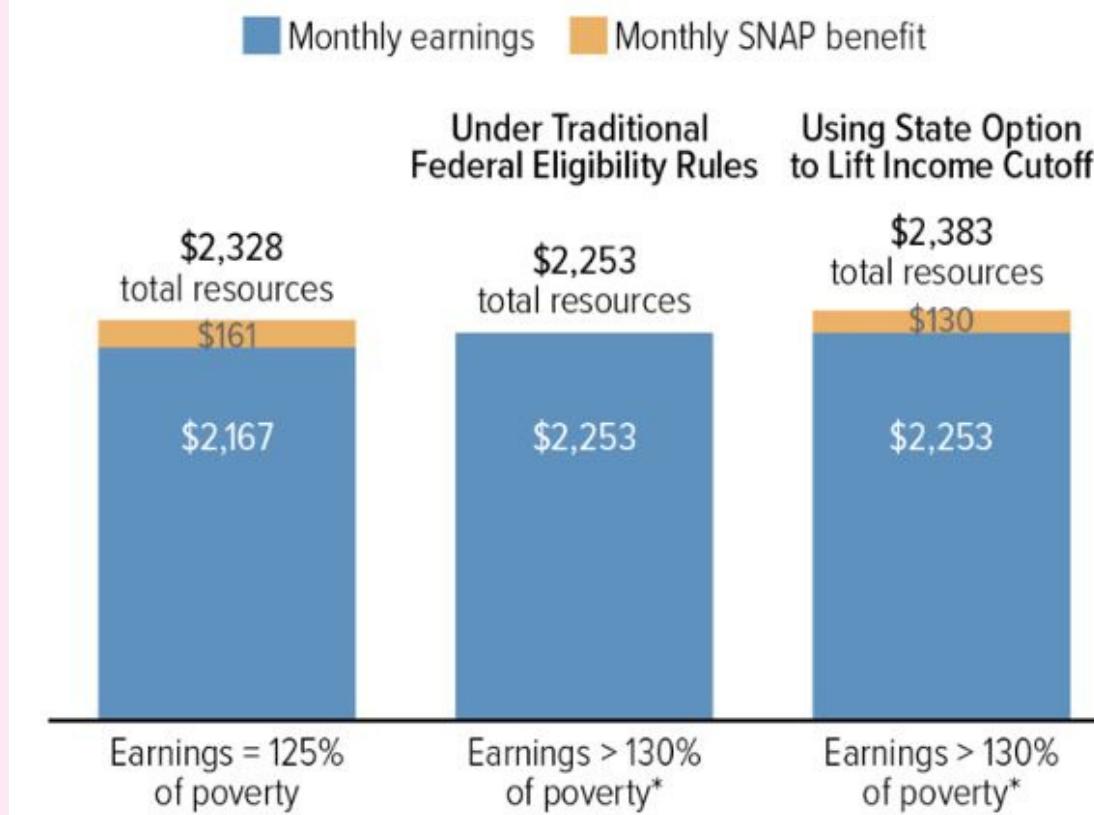


Note: This chart shows the phase out for a family of three with earned income that claims the \$164 standard deduction and the 20 percent earned income deduction, and that has \$1,209 in monthly shelter costs (the median value for working households of three with children that have incomes at or above 125 percent of poverty based on the fiscal year 2017 SNAP household characteristics data, inflated to 2019 dollars).

Source: CBPP calculation based on fiscal year (FY) 2019 SNAP federal benefit parameters and FY 2017 SNAP household characteristics data.

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

## SNAP's Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility Encourages Work



\*Earnings are equal to 130.1% of poverty or \$2,253 per month, just above the federal gross income threshold in fiscal year 2019.

Note: SNAP broad-based categorical eligibility allows states to raise income cutoffs by aligning SNAP's income limit to that of a household's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-funded benefit. This chart shows monthly earnings and SNAP benefits for a family of three with earned income that claims the \$164 standard deduction, the 20 percent earned income deduction, and has \$1,209 monthly shelter cost.

Source: CBPP calculation based on fiscal year (FY) 2019 SNAP federal benefit parameters and FY 2017 SNAP household characteristics data.

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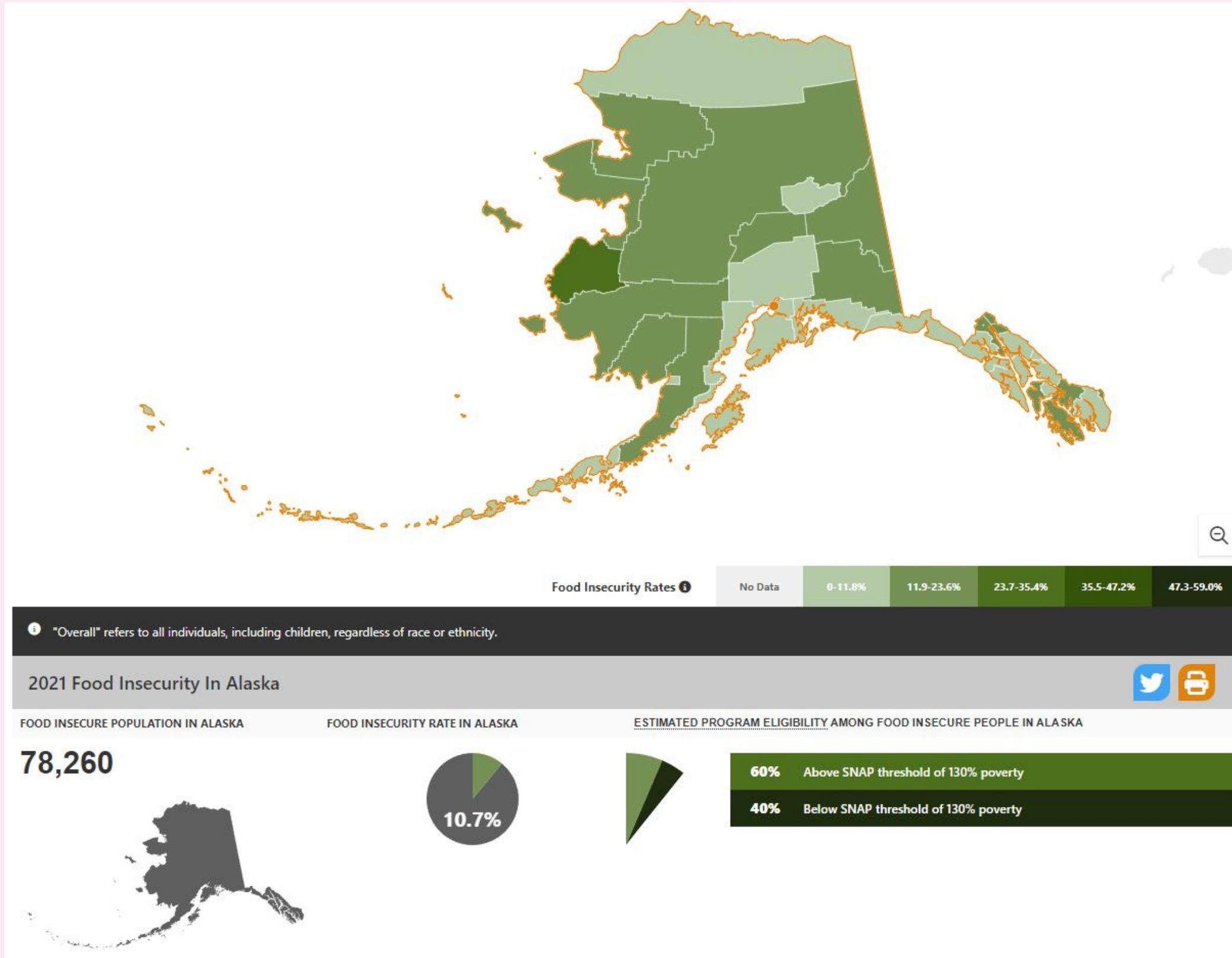
## SNAP + BBCE Works!

- Especially effective for families with high expenses
- Encourages employment and career advancement
- Reduces economic hardship
- Promotes financial planning and savings
- Supports a smoother transition to self-sufficiency
- Enhances social and health outcomes

Source: Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, "SNAP's "Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility" Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future." July 2019.

[https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snaps-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-supports-working-families-and#\\_ftn4](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snaps-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-supports-working-families-and#_ftn4)

# FOOD INSECURITY IN ALASKA



Alaska has some of the most food-insecure census regions in the U.S. Food insecurity in Alaska presents unique challenges compared to other states due to its vast geography, remote locations, and the high cost of transporting goods.

**On average, 9.5% of AK households were food insecure between 2019-2021.**

AK Food Insecurity Rate    U.S. Food Insecurity Rate



# WHEN WE CAN'T DELIVER ON SNAP

## As Alaska pays millions to fix food stamp backlog, lawmakers suggest systemic fixes

Senate committee hears bill intended to ease access to federal food aid program

BY: CLAIRE STREMPLE - FEBRUARY 15, 2024 5:58 AM



 Bulk food in Food Bank of Alaska's Anchorage warehouse on April 21, 2023. (Photo by Claire Stremple/Alaska Beacon)

## SNAP Backlog Crisis 2022 - Present

A perfect storm of factors contributed to a significant backlog of SNAP applications that arose in late 2022. These factors included **chronic understaffing at DPA, the ending of the COVID-19 pandemic flexibilities, and the reliance on legacy technology systems.**

As the SNAP backlog ballooned to over 10,000 applications, food pantries around the state saw a record number of families seeking food assistance. Most of these pantries could not keep up with demand.

## Bulk food purchasing

Governor Dunleavy added much-needed assistance to food pantries in the form of funding bulk food purchasing to restock pantry shelves. This allowed food banks and pantries to make bulk food purchases to help refill shelves and distribute food to families in need.

**FY23 Supplemental: \$1.78 million**

**FY24 Supplemental: \$3.0 million**

**FY25: \$1.5 million**

# SNAP IS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER

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- SNAP benefits are one of the most effective forms of economic stimulus because they quickly inject money into the economy
- Every **\$1** in SNAP benefits helps generate an estimated **\$1.50** in economic activity. SNAP dollars are especially impactful for local businesses and rural grocers.



Source: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, July 2019

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>

# Questions?

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Staff contact:

Katy Giorgio

907-465-4926

[katy.giorgio@akleg.gov](mailto:katy.giorgio@akleg.gov)



## Alaska

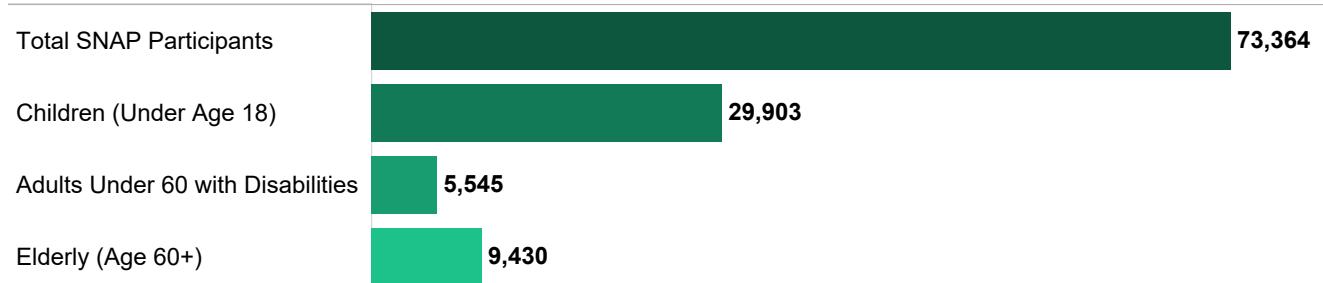
### Who Participates in SNAP?

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** provides food assistance for low-income individuals and households. Eligibility for SNAP and benefit levels are determined by a number of factors, including household size, income, and available resources. SNAP is available to everyone who applies and meets the eligibility requirements set by their State.

In fiscal year (FY) 2020\*, **73,364** people in **33,212** households received SNAP benefits in Alaska (AK). The average monthly benefit was **\$164** per person.

**84%** of AK households receiving SNAP in FY 2020 had income at or below the poverty line.

**22%** of AK households receiving SNAP in FY 2020 had income from wages or work.

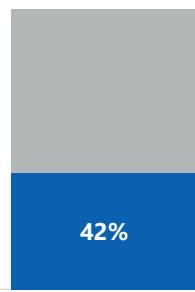


#### Not all who qualify for SNAP receive it.

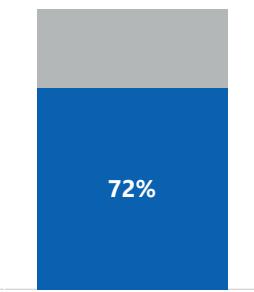
**89%** of all eligible people in AK received SNAP in 2019



**42%** of eligible elderly people in AK received SNAP in 2018



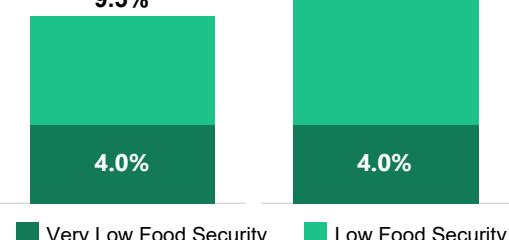
**72%** of eligible people in "working poor" households in AK received SNAP in 2019



**On average, 9.5% of AK households were food insecure between 2019-2021.**

AK Food Insecurity Rate    U.S. Food Insecurity Rate

**9.5%**



4.0%

4.0%

■ Participating in SNAP

■ Not Participating in SNAP

■ Very Low Food Security

■ Low Food Security



### What is SNAP's Economic Impact?

An average of **\$12 million** in SNAP benefits were issued each month in AK in FY 2020. SNAP benefits are spent on food, so they support farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers. Approximately **511** food retailers accept SNAP benefits in AK.

During economic downturns, every \$1 in new SNAP benefits issued can increase gross domestic product by \$1.54.

To learn more about SNAP, please visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>.

\*Data limited to Sept. 2019 - Feb. 2020 due to COVID-19-related impacts on data availability.

Data on SNAP participation and participant characteristics from fiscal year 2020 SNAP quality control data. SNAP participation rates available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap>. Food insecurity prevalence data from USDA Economic Research Service. Data on SNAP retailers from USDA's SNAP Retailer Locator. More on SNAP's economic multiplier available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most important and effective anti-hunger program. Congress made many temporary improvements to SNAP during the COVID-19 pandemic to take advantage of the program's ability to deliver benefits quickly in response to job and income losses, including by authorizing emergency allotments and certain eligibility and administrative changes. These changes have either already ended or will expire when the public health emergency ends on May 11, 2023. Alaska ended emergency allotments starting in September 2022.

## Whom Does SNAP Reach?

In fiscal year 2022, it helped:

- **92,100** Alaska residents, or **13%** of the state population (**1 in 8**)
- **41,206,900** participants in the United States, or **12%** of the total population (**1 in 8**)

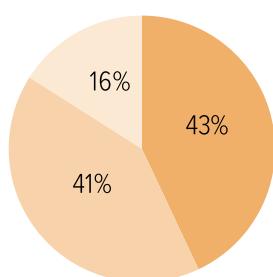
<b>ALASKA</b>	more than <b>66%</b> of SNAP participants are in families with children	more than <b>30%</b> are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	more than <b>37%</b> are in working families
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	more than <b>65%</b> of SNAP participants are in families with children	more than <b>36%</b> are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	more than <b>41%</b> are in working families

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)<sup>a</sup>

### Most SNAP Participants in Alaska Have Incomes Below the Poverty Line

Share of participants by household income, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)

- Income at or below 50% of poverty line
- Income between 51-100% of poverty line
- Income above 100% of poverty line



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)<sup>b</sup>

### Many Alaska households struggle to put food on the table. The most recent data show:

- **9.5%** of households were “food insecure,” meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.
- **10.5%** of the population lived below the poverty line.
- **12.4%** of children lived below the poverty line.
- **8.5%** of older adults lived below the poverty line.

**SNAP reaches populations in need:** **89%** of eligible individuals participated in SNAP in **Alaska** in 2018, and **80%** of eligible workers participated.

SNAP lifted **22,000** people above the poverty line in **Alaska**, including **10,000** children, per year between 2014 and 2018, on average. (These figures adjust for households’ underreporting of benefits.)

## What Benefits Do SNAP Participants Receive?

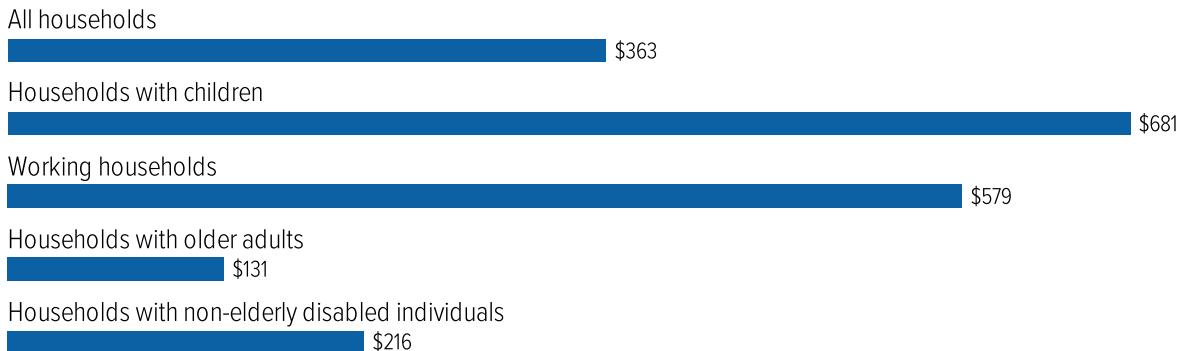
SNAP targets benefits according to need. Households with very low incomes receive more SNAP benefits than households closer to the poverty line because they need more help affording adequate food. SNAP participants in Alaska received **\$171.09 million** in benefits in 2019, **\$198.3 million** in 2020, **\$288.05 million** in 2021, and **\$348.72 million** in 2022 (including temporary pandemic relief in 2020 through 2022).

SNAP benefits since early 2020 have been affected by temporary pandemic-related benefit increases; an adjustment to the Thrifty Food Plan, upon which SNAP benefits are based; and higher-than-normal cost-of-living adjustments to reflect high food price inflation.



	Average SNAP benefit in nominal dollars, fiscal year 2023 (estimated, after all pandemic measures expire)
For each household member per month:	<b>\$271</b>
For each household member per day:	<b>\$8.90</b>

## Average Monthly SNAP Benefit By Demographic Group, Fiscal Year 2020 (pre-pandemic period), Alaska



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)

## How Does SNAP Benefit the Economy?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that in a weak economy, \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic activity. Households receive SNAP benefits on electronic benefit transfer cards, which can be used only to purchase food at one of about **254,400** authorized retail locations around the country, including some **500** in Alaska.

**Notes:** Due to a higher cost of living, Alaska has different eligibility, deduction, and benefit levels than the continental U.S. Alaskan SNAP participation declines annually following the increase in income residents experience from the receipt of dividends from the Alaska Permanent Fund. In addition to SNAP, in fiscal year 2022, based on preliminary data, an average of about 200 individuals per month in Alaska received benefits through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) which is a federal program that provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly, living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations and in the state of Oklahoma.

### For more information on SNAP, including Alaska-specific information, please see:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Chart Book: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table>

USDA SNAP data: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

Alaska SNAP program: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/SNAP/default.aspx>

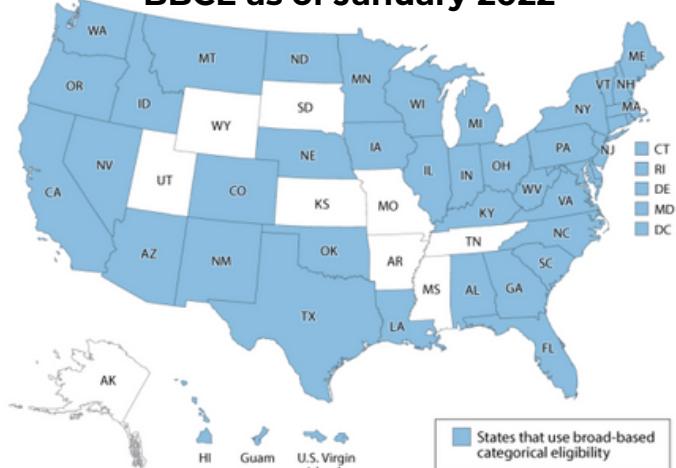
<sup>a</sup> Shares are for the pre-pandemic period of fiscal year 2020, from October 2019 to February 2020. Administrative data on the pandemic period of fiscal year 2020 (March 2020 through September 2020) are not presented, because state data are not available for every month during this period. The COVID-19 pandemic limited data collection in the months of March through September 2020.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

**Alaska has an opportunity to help put food on the table for low-income working families and seniors.**

This state option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is proven to increase efficiency of application processing and is effective at supporting working Alaskans and seniors on fixed incomes. Most states are already taking advantage of this option, known as Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), demonstrating the appeal and success of its implementation.

## States Opting for SNAP BBCE as of January 2022



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as of January 2022.

Note: Some states implement "narrow" categorical eligibility. Without a reliable data source for "narrow," this map only reflects those opting for broad-based categorical eligibility.

## Why is BBCE right for Alaska?

There are several key reasons why adopting BBCE is right for Alaska...



### It helps working families by eliminating a "benefits cliff" as their earnings rise.

BBCE allows states to phase down benefits for working families as their income rises. We often hear about SNAP clients who turn down a raise at work for fear that they will lose more benefits than their increased earnings. BBCE allows states to lift this threshold and gradually lower benefits which lets households take higher-paying work and still benefit from SNAP.



**It lets low-income households save for the future.** Research has shown that assets are crucial to helping families escape poverty and climb the economic ladder and asset limits send the wrong message by discouraging savings. Not only do SNAP participants need savings to obtain and retain jobs, address emergencies, and ensure they are not living paycheck-to-paycheck, but accumulating and being able to pass assets on to the next generation is a key strategy for families to escape the cycle of poverty.



**It encourages SNAP participants to get and keep jobs.** Raising the asset and income limit will allow SNAP participants to climb their way to financial security by allowing them to accept pay raises, gradually reduce benefits, and set aside savings for the future. Additionally, removing the asset test allows recently unemployed workers to receive benefits without having to spend down savings. This is similar to unemployment insurance which does not have an asset test to qualify.



**It simplifies SNAP administration and increases State's flexibility.** In addition to the benefits for SNAP participants, BBCE also has administrative benefits:

- It reduces the complexity of the SNAP application process for states and households, increasing administrative efficiency
- It reduces the risk of errors in eligibility determination
- It is a proven way of helping low-income families without costing the state anything



## **Alaska does not currently use BBCE**

Without this option, Alaskan households are subject to the federal asset and income tests:

- **Families must earn less than 130% of the federal poverty line**, or \$2,683 per month (net) for a family of four in FY20. Families making just \$1 more per month lose their benefits.
- **Households cannot have assets ( including money in the bank) exceeding \$2,250**, or \$3,500 for households with at least one elderly or disabled family member.

**Broad-based Categorical Eligibility is a win for both government administrative efficiency and family economic security. This option will provide the State of Alaska with a no-cost avenue to increasing caseworker efficiency, while helping clients to become self-sufficient.**

## **How can we implement this option in Alaska?**

Under this option, households may become “categorically” eligible for SNAP if they also qualify for a non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefit.

- States can elect to implement less restrictive asset and/or income limits for many or all households that apply for SNAP if they receive TANF or a TANF Maintenance-of-Effort funded benefit, such as a pamphlet or an 800-number.
- Implementing this change can be a simple administrative change within the Department of Health, or a legislative change. In some states, implementation was as simple as waiving the asset questions during the application process.

# **ALASKA FOOD COALITION**

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Updated July 30, 2019

## SNAP’s “Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility” Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future

By Dorothy Rosenbaum

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation’s largest food assistance program, generally operates under a consistent set of federal eligibility rules. But one policy area that results in differences in income and eligibility rules across states is “broad-based categorical eligibility” (BBCE), which enables states to raise SNAP income eligibility limits somewhat so that many low-income working families that have difficulty making ends meet, such as because they face costly housing or child care expenses that consume a sizeable share of their income, can receive help affording adequate food. This policy also lets states adopt less restrictive asset tests so that families, seniors, and people with a disability can have modest savings without losing SNAP.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this two-decade old policy, more than 40 states effectively use less restrictive income and asset tests in SNAP, which allows them to better support low-income working families, promote asset-building among those households, and improve state administration while lowering administrative costs. (See Figure 1.) Nonetheless, the Trump Administration on July 23 issued a proposed regulation to essentially eliminate the policy through executive action.<sup>2</sup>

The Administration estimates that its proposed regulation would terminate SNAP eligibility for more than 3 million individuals. The people losing access to SNAP would mainly be working families, seniors, and people with disabilities. The change would primarily affect two groups that federal and state policymakers from across the political spectrum have long sought to help: those working but still near poverty and those saving modestly in order to become more economically independent.

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<sup>1</sup> The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, the law that authorizes SNAP, requires households that receive a TANF-funded benefit to be categorically eligible for SNAP. Broad-based categorical eligibility is commonly referred as an “option” because states have the option whether to provide to households the TANF-funded benefits that trigger categorical eligibility. For more details, see box, “What Is Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility?”

<sup>2</sup> “Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” *Federal Register*, July 24, 2019, Vol. 84, No. 142, 35570-35581, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/07/24/2019-15670/revision-of-categorical-eligibility-in-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

BBCE is highly effective. It:

- **Helps working families by eliminating a “benefit cliff” as their earnings rise.** SNAP supports work in part by phasing benefits down gradually — by only 24 to 36 cents for each dollar of increased earnings. But without BBCE, a family can lose substantial SNAP benefits from a small earnings increase that raises its gross income over SNAP’s eligibility threshold (130 percent of the federal poverty line, or \$2,252 per month for a family of three in fiscal year 2019).<sup>3</sup> BBCE allows states to lift this threshold and phase benefits out more gradually, which lets households close to that threshold take higher-paying work and still benefit from SNAP.
- **Lets low-income households save for the future.** Modest assets enable low-income families to avoid debt, weather unexpected financial disruptions, and better prepare to support themselves in retirement. Under regular federal SNAP rules, countable assets cannot exceed \$2,250 for most households and \$3,500 for households with members who are elderly or have a disability; BBCE lets states increase or eliminate those limits for SNAP. Low-income households in states that have used the policy to raise asset limits are likelier to have a bank account and have at least \$500 in it, a recent Urban Institute study found.
- **Simplifies SNAP administration.** BBCE reduces the complexity of the SNAP application process for states and households. It also lowers “churn,” which occurs when SNAP households stop participating in SNAP (for procedural reasons or because they briefly become ineligible) and then reapply within a very short period. Churn creates added work for state workers and benefit gaps for SNAP households.

Moreover, BBCE does not contribute substantially to SNAP costs. Only about 4 percent of SNAP program costs (and about 8 percent of SNAP participation) are due to BBCE, the Administration estimates.<sup>4</sup>

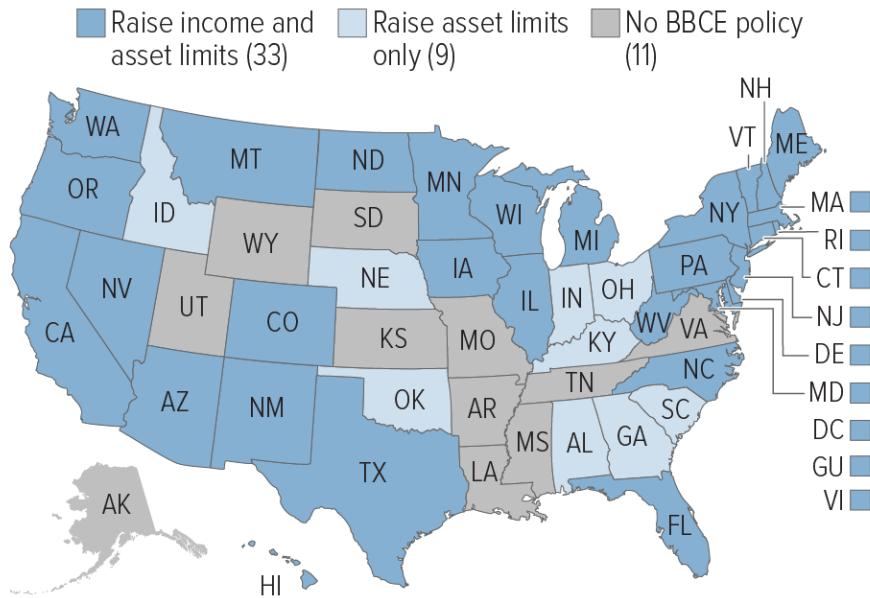
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<sup>3</sup> Households that contain individuals with disabilities or seniors do not face a gross income test under federal rules. BBCE allows states to create parity across all households with respect to this rule.

<sup>4</sup> The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that BBCE accounts for only about 2 percent of SNAP costs and about 5 percent of SNAP participation. These estimates are based on CBO’s re-estimate of President Trump’s 2020 budget proposal to restrict SNAP categorical eligibility to only households receiving cash assistance under TANF. (CBO’s re-estimate of this policy is available at <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2019-05/55215-snap.pdf>.) The CBO estimate of the number of participants eligible because of BBCE is based on 2016 SNAP household characteristics data and earlier CBO estimates of the number of people who would be affected by eliminating BBCE.

FIGURE 1

## Over 40 States Use Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility



Note: Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) enables states to qualify certain low-income households for SNAP if they receive a non-cash benefit funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant.

Source: Department of Agriculture, "Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility," October 2018

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## What Is Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility?

Low-income households receiving cash assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or General Assistance have long been considered automatically (or “categorically”) eligible for SNAP, which means they do not separately have to pass SNAP’s asset or gross income tests.

The 1996 law that replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) broadened SNAP categorical eligibility because of the flexibility it gave states to offer *non-cash* benefits funded under the TANF block grant, such as child care assistance or employment-support services. This policy is known as “broad-based categorical eligibility” (BBCE) to distinguish it from traditional categorical eligibility. States using BBCE have elected to offer a TANF-funded benefit or service to a large segment of SNAP applicants as a way to lift the SNAP income and/or asset test and allow more low-income households to qualify for SNAP while simplifying SNAP administration. Other SNAP eligibility and benefit rules continue to apply.<sup>a</sup>

For categorically eligible households, states still must review fully each household’s income and other circumstances to determine its SNAP benefit. (BBCE does not give the state any flexibility on the benefit amounts for which a household is eligible.) And, like all SNAP households, categorically eligible households must complete a SNAP application, have an interview with a state official, document their financial and other circumstances, report changes in their circumstances, and regularly reapply for SNAP.

BBCE does not cause substantial SNAP benefits to go to non-needy families because households can only qualify for a sizable SNAP benefit if they have high expenses that leave them with little income available for food. Only about 0.2 percent of SNAP benefits went to households with monthly disposable incomes (net income after deducting certain expenses) above the federal poverty line in 2017.

By providing a TANF-funded benefit with a less restrictive asset or income limit to many or all households that apply for SNAP, a state can:

- **Raise SNAP’s gross income limit.** Regular federal SNAP rules require families with no elderly or disabled members to have gross income below 130 percent of the poverty line.<sup>b</sup> BBCE lets states import a higher gross income limit (up to 200 percent of poverty) from a TANF-funded program.
- **Lift the asset test.** BBCE lets states align their SNAP asset test with their TANF-funded programs to determine the amount of financial resources — and/or what vehicle — a household may own and remain eligible. For example, Texas has used this flexibility to allow SNAP households to own one vehicle worth up to \$15,000 and have savings of up to \$5,000. Under regular federal SNAP rules, countable assets cannot exceed \$2,250 for most households and \$3,500 for households with members who are elderly or have a disability, and vehicles count toward the asset test to the extent their resale value exceeds \$4,650.<sup>c</sup>
- **Make additional low-income children eligible for free school meals.** Children in households that receive SNAP are automatically eligible for free school meals without having to complete a separate application. Without BBCE, children whose families lose SNAP when their incomes rise above the program threshold also would lose this automatic link to free school meals.

<sup>a</sup> For more details, see Congressional Research Service, “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Categorical Eligibility,” updated January 4, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R42054>.

<sup>b</sup> Gross income is total income before deductions SNAP allows for certain expenses, such as high housing and utility costs and child care and medical expenses. The SNAP benefit formula deducts these costs because these amounts are not available to the household to cover the cost of food. For detail on the SNAP benefit formula, including deductions,

see “A Quick Guide to SNAP Eligibility and Benefits,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, updated October 16, 2018, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/a-quick-guide-to-snap-eligibility-and-benefits>.

◦ Under BBCE, states may lift the asset test for households with gross income up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Countable income for SNAP includes unearned income such as interest and dividends.

## **BBCE Helps Working Families Afford Adequate Food, Eliminates Benefit Cliff**

SNAP encourages and supports work.<sup>5</sup> The majority of SNAP participants who can work, do work. Among adults participating in SNAP who did not receive disability benefits in a typical month in mid-2012, 52 percent worked in that month, and about 74 percent worked at some point in the year before or after that month.<sup>6</sup>

Some policymakers argue that because SNAP benefits fall when participants’ earnings rise, workers might be better off financially by avoiding employment gains that could put their benefits at risk. In reality, however, SNAP’s benefit structure rewards earnings over unearned income, incentivizing participants to work and to seek greater income through higher wages or more hours. SNAP’s earned income deduction disregards 20 percent of participants’ earned income when calculating their income, and benefits phase out only gradually as income rises (by 24 to 36 cents per additional dollar of earnings; see Figure 2). As a result, the vast majority of SNAP workers will see an *increase* in their total income — that is, earnings plus SNAP — when their earnings increase, which gives them an incentive to take a job or work more or at a higher wage.

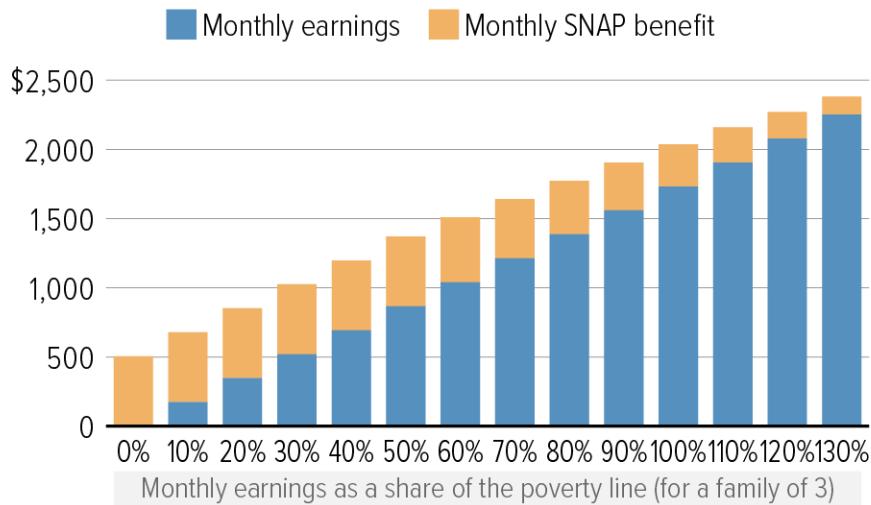
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<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Wolkomir and Lexin Cai, “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Includes Earnings Incentives,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 5, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-includes-earnings-incentives>.

<sup>6</sup> Brynne Keith-Jennings and Raheem Chaudhry, “Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 15, 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/most-working-age-snap-participants-work-but-often-in-unstable-jobs>.

FIGURE 2

## SNAP Benefits Gradually Phase Out as Earnings Rise



Note: This chart shows the phase out for a family of three with earned income that claims the \$164 standard deduction and the 20 percent earned income deduction, and that has \$1,209 in monthly shelter costs (the median value for working households of three with children that have incomes at or above 125 percent of poverty based on the fiscal year 2017 SNAP household characteristics data, inflated to 2019 dollars).

Source: CBPP calculation based on fiscal year (FY) 2019 SNAP federal benefit parameters and FY 2017 SNAP household characteristics data.

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One aspect of SNAP can create a benefit cliff, in which a worker may not be better off financially from increasing her or his income. SNAP's gross income limit of 130 percent of the federal poverty line creates a benefit cliff for households that increase their earnings above that level. The cliff occurs for working families whose income is close to the gross income limit and who have high expenses — including housing and child care — that absorb a large share of their income. Families with large deductible expenses have less disposable income from other sources with which to purchase food, so they receive higher SNAP benefits. As a result, they have more to lose from becoming ineligible for food assistance if a modest increase in earnings pushes them above the federal income threshold. If their earnings do not rise by more than their SNAP benefit loss, working more or at a higher wage leaves them worse off, overall.

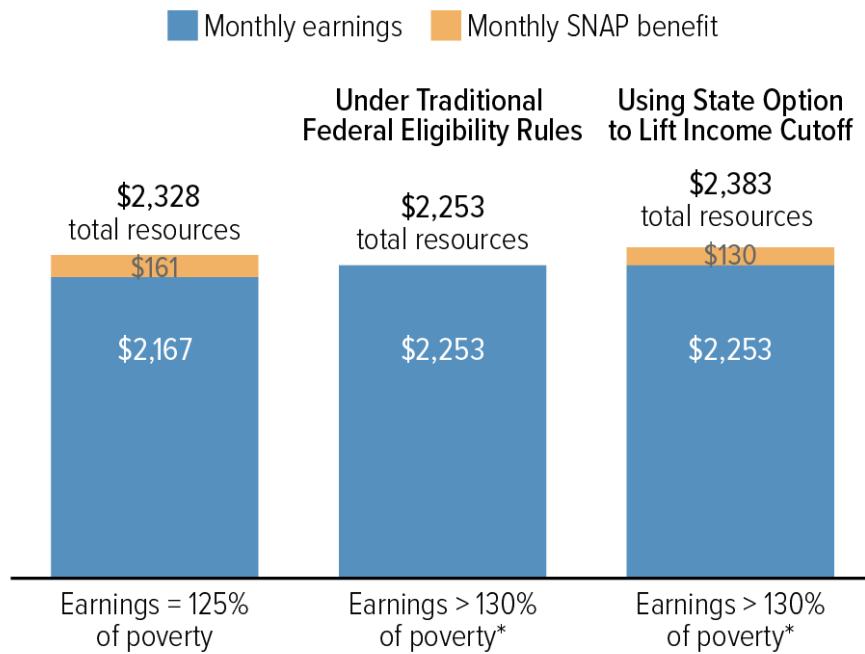
This is where BBCE comes in. It allows states to lift the gross income limit and provide SNAP benefits to these working families. Consider, for example, a single mother with two children working full time at \$12.50 an hour; her income is 125 percent of the poverty level and she receives about \$161 a month from SNAP, making up about 7 percent of her total monthly income.<sup>7</sup> If her hourly wage rises by just 50 cents (or \$86 a month), lifting her slightly above 130 percent of poverty, she

<sup>7</sup> The calculation assumes the family has only earned income, claims the \$164 standard deduction and 20 percent earned income deduction, and has \$1,209 in monthly shelter costs (the median value for working households of three with children that have incomes at or above 125 percent of poverty based on the fiscal year 2017 SNAP household characteristics data adjusted to 2019 dollars).

loses her \$161 a month in SNAP benefits, leaving her family about \$75 a month worse off. But with BBCE, a 50-cent raise would reduce her SNAP benefit by only \$31 per month (to about \$130), leaving the family \$55 per month *better off* due to her wage increase. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3

## SNAP's Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility Encourages Work



\*Earnings are equal to 130.1% of poverty or \$2,253 per month, just above the federal gross income threshold in fiscal year 2019.

Note: SNAP broad-based categorical eligibility allows states to raise income cutoffs by aligning SNAP's income limit to that of a household's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-funded benefit. This chart shows monthly earnings and SNAP benefits for a family of three with earned income that claims the \$164 standard deduction, the 20 percent earned income deduction, and has \$1,209 monthly shelter cost.

Source: CBPP calculation based on fiscal year (FY) 2019 SNAP federal benefit parameters and FY 2017 SNAP household characteristics data.

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Thus, BBCE helps households close to the income threshold accept higher-paying work while staying connected to SNAP. This issue affects a small share of SNAP households: only 3 percent of SNAP households with no members who are elderly or have a disability have earnings between 120 and 130 percent of the poverty line.

More than 30 states use this policy to ease SNAP's modest benefit cliff. (See Figure 1.) In an average month, approximately 2 million low-income individuals receive food assistance as a result of the flexibility under BBCE to ease SNAP's income eligibility limit. The average household helped by the higher gross income limit receives about \$100 a month in SNAP benefits, and about 90 percent of the benefits provided to low-income households that qualify for SNAP because their state uses a higher gross income limit go to working families with children.

As noted, BBCE primarily helps households with high expenses: more than 90 percent of the resulting benefits go to households whose rent or mortgage and utility costs exceed half of their net income, and about 50 percent go to households that pay for dependent care for a child or elderly or disabled household member.<sup>8</sup> Three-quarters of the benefits go to households with gross income between 131 percent and 150 percent of the poverty line.

Children in households that receive SNAP because of BBCE also can receive free lunches and breakfasts at school without completing an additional application, because children in SNAP households are directly certified to receive free school meals. About half a million children would lose automatic eligibility for free school meals because of the changes in the proposed rule, according to unpublished Administration estimates.<sup>9</sup> Virtually all children whose families would lose SNAP if BBCE were rolled back would qualify for reduced-price meals, but they would have to file an application, which not all would do. As a result, while many would pay the reduced price (about \$15 per month per child), some children would lose school meals altogether.<sup>10</sup>

## **BBCE Lets Families, Seniors, People With Disabilities Save for the Future**

The BBCE policy also lets states lift SNAP's very low asset test, which disqualifies families from food assistance if they have managed to save as little as \$2,250 (or \$3,500 for households with elderly or disabled members, who are very unlikely to be able to replenish any assets they spend down).<sup>11</sup> Building assets can help low-income families and individuals invest in their future, avert a financial crisis that could push them deeper into poverty or into homelessness, and avoid accumulating debt that can impede economic mobility. Savings also help people prepare for retirement or potential disability for themselves or a family member. Policies that support asset-building are particularly important for people of color, who have historically been disadvantaged in accumulating wealth due to discrimination.

More than 40 states have used BBCE to drop the asset test in SNAP, thereby eliminating the program's savings disincentive and encouraging savings as a means to support greater opportunity.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on a CBPP analysis of the fiscal year 2017 SNAP household characteristics data. These figures are for an average month of the fiscal year for households that would be ineligible if the aspect of BBCE that allows states to raise their income limits were eliminated; they do not include the effect of the aspect that allows states to lift their asset tests.

<sup>9</sup> Press Statement of Representatives Richard Neal, Bobby Scott, and Collin Peterson, July 23, 2019, <https://neal.house.gov/press-releases/chairmen-neal-scott-and-peterson-oppose-administrations-unilateral-proposal-kick>, and Suzy Khimm, "Trump plan failed to note that it could jeopardize free school lunches for 500,000 children, Democrats say," NBCnews, July 29, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-plan-failed-note-it-could-jeopardize-free-school-lunches-n1035281>.

<sup>10</sup> Families with income at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line qualify for free school meals. Children in households that receive SNAP are considered categorically eligible for free school meals, and states use a data match to certify them based on their SNAP participation (this is known as "direct certification"). Children in households at or below 185 percent of poverty qualify for reduced-price meals.

<sup>11</sup> Under federal SNAP rules, resources that could be available to the household to purchase food, such as amounts in bank accounts, count as assets. Items that are not accessible, such as the household's home, personal property, and retirement savings, do not count. The rules count the market value of most vehicles above \$4,650 toward the asset limit. In the absence of BBCE, states would retain flexibility to apply less restrictive vehicle asset rules under another state option, but they would have to modify state policy to do so.

(See Figure 1.) In these states, low-income households that would be denied SNAP can instead receive food assistance in at least three situations.

- Participating SNAP households can begin building modest savings without losing food assistance. This may help them weather financial emergencies and invest in their future, for example by obtaining a vehicle that lets them find and keep a job, buying a home, or saving for their children’s education.
- Families that lose their jobs or experience another short-term financial crisis (such as a divorce or unexpected temporary disability) do not have to liquidate their savings before they can receive help affording groceries from SNAP.
- Households with seniors or people with disabilities, who may have limited ability to save because they no longer work, can receive SNAP benefits to purchase groceries while they maintain a cushion that can help them weather future financial emergencies.

**Many households, including most low-income households, have few savings.** Many Americans have difficulty saving enough to withstand a financial disruption, research shows. Four in ten American adults, across the income spectrum, say they either could not cover an emergency expense of \$400 or would need to sell something or borrow to do so. The rates for people of color without a high school degree are even higher: 58 percent of Black respondents and 48 percent of Hispanic respondents without a high school degree say they could not cover a \$400 emergency expense.<sup>12</sup>

Households participating in SNAP have even lower assets. Only 48 percent of SNAP households have *any* liquid assets, and the median value among those who do have assets is just \$450. (The median value is even lower — \$250 — if retirement accounts are excluded, as is the case under SNAP rules.) Just over half of SNAP households have a bank account, and the median amount in the account is just \$150.<sup>13</sup>

**Savings help low-income households weather emergencies.** Unexpected life events and unplanned expenses affect all households, but for households with low income that may have trouble meeting routine costs each month, a financial shock such as a job loss, unanticipated car repair, or medical expense can cascade into a major problem and lead to severe hardship.<sup>14</sup> Even modest assets can help a family or individual with fixed income (such as a senior citizen) weather such shocks, research shows. One study found that households with liquid savings of up to \$2,000 are significantly less likely than otherwise-similar households with no liquid assets to experience

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<sup>12</sup> Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, “Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2018,” May 2019, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/files/2018-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201905.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Ratcliffe *et al.*, “Asset Limits, SNAP Participation, and Financial Stability,” Urban Institute, June 2016, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2000843-asset-limits-snap-participation-and-financial-stability.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Signe-Mary McKernan, Caroline Ratcliffe, and Katie Vinopal, “Do Assets Help Families Cope with Adverse Events?” Urban Institute, December 14, 2009, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-assets-help-families-cope-adverse-events>.

multiple hardships, such as food insecurity or a utility shutoff, and that “progressively larger effects are found with larger asset holdings.”<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, researchers have found that low assets contribute to food insecurity, or inadequate access to food at some point during the year. Households lacking even small savings have fewer options when faced with an unexpected financial shock. One study found that households without a bank account are 15 percent likelier to be food insecure and 34 percent likelier to experience very low food security, a more severe form of food insecurity.<sup>16</sup>

Savings also can help low-income families avoid the spiraling costs associated with predatory financial products, such as payday loans.<sup>17</sup>

**BBCE may encourage modest savings, research suggests.** SNAP households in states that have raised the asset limit using BBCE are likelier to have at least \$500 in assets and to have a bank account, compared to similar households in states that maintain the federal asset limit, an Urban Institute study found. The authors concluded that “changes to reinstate federal SNAP asset limits will harm family financial stability and security.”<sup>18</sup>

Other research has looked at asset limits in TANF (or AFDC before 1996). A study in the mid-2000s found that higher TANF asset limits are associated with higher rates of families with a bank account and higher liquid assets overall. It also found that these positive effects grew with the length of time since a state raised its asset limits, suggesting there is a learning period for participants to understand when rules change.<sup>19</sup> An earlier study found that higher AFDC asset limits were strongly associated with higher savings among current and potential AFDC recipients: each \$1 increase in asset limits raised savings among female household heads by \$0.25.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gregory Mills and Joe Amick, “Can Savings Help Overcome Income Instability?” Urban Institute, December 2010, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32771/412290-Can-Savings-Help-Overcome-Income-Instability-.PDF>.

<sup>16</sup> Katie Fitzpatrick, “Bank Accounts, Nonbank Financial Transaction Products, and Food Insecurity among Households with Children,” American Council on Consumer Interests, September 7, 2017, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/joca.12158>.

<sup>17</sup> “Payday Lending in America: Who Borrows, Where they Borrow, and Why,” Pew Charitable Trusts, July 2012, [https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs\\_assets/2012/pewpaydaylendingreportpdf.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2012/pewpaydaylendingreportpdf.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> The study found that living in a state that adopted BBCE increases the likelihood that a low-income household has savings of at least \$500 (by 8 percent) and has a bank account (by 5 percent). Caroline Ratcliffe *et al.*, “The Unintended Consequences of SNAP Asset Limits,” Urban Institute, July 2016, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/82886/2000872-The-Unintended-Consequences-of-SNAP-Asset-Limits.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Yunju Nam, “Welfare Reform and Asset Accumulation: Asset Limit Changes, Financial Assets, and Vehicle Ownership,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 89, No. 1, March 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth T. Powers, “Does means-testing welfare discourage saving? Evidence from a Change in AFDC Policy in the United States,” *Journal of Public Economics*, Vol. 68, 1998. Other studies, however, have found no statistically significant relationship between asset limits and households’ liquid assets. The inconclusive research literature likely reflects the fact that most low-income families hold very few assets, so the SNAP asset limits are not binding for the vast majority of households that apply for (or consider applying for) SNAP, and lifting them thus has little impact on most households as a result.

**Allowing SNAP households to build and retain savings helps in a small way to correct for the nation's large racial disparities in wealth.** People of color have historically faced barriers to accumulating wealth by buying homes or building other assets. These barriers, deeply rooted in discriminatory public policies and private actions, have led to vast disparities in income and wealth. The median net worth of white families is about ten times that of Black families and roughly eight times that of Hispanic families.<sup>21</sup>

The federal and state tax codes include many incentives for asset building, such as special treatment of retirement and education savings and mortgage interest, as well as tax breaks on capital gains and other income from wealth. Low-income families, including many people of color, historically could not take advantage of these asset-building opportunities, largely because the economic barriers they face mean they have much less discretionary income. Policies that help support asset building among low-income families, like BBCE, can help begin addressing some of these disparities. Without BBCE, senior citizens — including those who are people of color — need to spend all but \$3,500 of their savings before they can receive any help from SNAP in affording groceries.

## **BBCE Improves Administrative Efficiency**

States have embraced BBCE because it helps them better serve working families and those saving for the future, as described above. It also helps states streamline their operations.

Few low-income households that apply for SNAP have assets above the federal limits, but states that have not used BBCE to raise the asset limit must ask about assets during the application process and eligibility interview. In many cases, households and state workers will need to gather documents about households' assets, even when such assets are too small to disqualify the household from SNAP. These activities increase administrative workload and costs for states. Adopting BBCE thus can make state operations more efficient.

In addition, because the reduced paperwork makes SNAP's recertification process less complicated, BBCE has been found to reduce administrative churn, which creates unnecessary administrative burdens and costs for states as well as for SNAP households. In states that have adopted the policy, households are 26 percent less likely to experience churn over the course of a year than similar households in other states, a recent Urban Institute study found.<sup>22</sup>

Any changes to BBCE would require states to alter their SNAP eligibility rules, modify their computer systems, retrain staff, and revise applications and program manuals. Such changes also would make SNAP rules considerably more complicated — and inconsistent with the rules in states' TANF and Medicaid programs. As Mississippi Executive Director of Human Services John Davis testified before the House Agriculture Committee in June 2019, reinstating the asset test would cost

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<sup>21</sup> William R. Emmons *et al.*, "The Demographics of Wealth, 2018 Series, Executive Summary," Center for Household Financial Stability, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, September 2018, [https://www.stlouisfed.org/~/media/files/pdfs/hfs/essays/hfs\\_essay3\\_2018.pdf?la=en](https://www.stlouisfed.org/~/media/files/pdfs/hfs/essays/hfs_essay3_2018.pdf?la=en).

<sup>22</sup> Ratcliffe *et al.*, June 2016, *op. cit.*

the state at least \$1.5 million because “automation would be very expensive.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes testified that “eliminating categorical eligibility could cost taxpayers 2 million dollars and likely would take about 18 months to implement. . . . Income maintenance agencies and counties across Wisconsin would also see increased costs if this option was eliminated, because it would take them longer to complete member interviews, request verifications, and process those verifications.”<sup>24</sup> And Urban Institute Senior Fellow Elaine Waxman told the committee:

The evidence we have discussed today . . . suggests that eliminating or significantly restricting BBCE could in fact undermine several key goals for [SNAP]: to reduce food insecurity, to encourage work and increased earnings, to permit the building of basic assets that can help buffer income shocks and reduce disparities across the U.S., and to minimize the burden on states as they prioritize their limited resources.<sup>25</sup>

## **BBCE Has Not Substantially Increased SNAP Caseloads or Costs**

States’ use of BBCE accounts for only about 4 percent of SNAP program costs and about 8 percent of SNAP participation, the Administration estimates.<sup>26</sup> Many states implemented the policy during the Great Recession, partly to lower their workloads at a time when caseloads were rising rapidly due to the severe downturn. However, only about 10 percent of the caseload increase during the recession was due to BBCE, according to recent studies.<sup>27</sup>

## **Conclusion**

States leverage BBCE as a means to adopt less restrictive income and asset tests and thereby better coordinate SNAP with other state-operated programs. On a bipartisan basis, Congress has repeatedly rejected proposals to cut SNAP by rolling back BBCE, most recently in the farm bill enacted late last year. States widely use the policy to extend SNAP’s reach to low-income households that struggle to afford food but might not otherwise meet SNAP’s rigid income and asset tests. Rolling back BBCE would cause millions of low-income individuals to lose their SNAP benefits

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<sup>23</sup> Testimony of John Davis, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Human Services, before the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations, Committee on Agriculture, June 20, 2019, <https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrsg-116-ag03-wstate-johndavisj-20190620.pdf>.

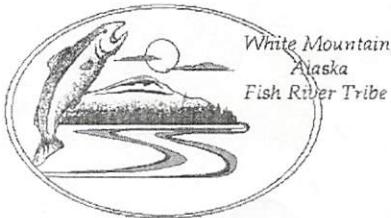
<sup>24</sup> Testimony of Mandela Barnes, Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin Before the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations, Committee on Agriculture, June 20, 2019, <https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrsg-116-ag03-wstate-barnesm-20190620.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Testimony of Elaine Waxman, Senior Fellow, Income and Benefits Policy Center, Urban Institute before the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations, Committee on Agriculture, June 20, 2019, <https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrsg-116-ag03-wstate-waxmane-20190620.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> See note 4.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Ganong and Liebman found that this option accounted for about 8 percent of the increase between 2007 and 2011, and Dickert-Conlin *et al.*, found that BBCE “only explains up to 12 percent of the recent caseload increase.” Peter Ganong and Jeffrey B. Liebman, “The Decline, Rebound, and Further Rise in SNAP Enrollment: Disentangling Business Cycle Fluctuations and Policy Changes,” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, Vol. 10, No. 4, November 2018, pp.153-176, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20140016&&from=f>. Stacy Dickert-Conlin *et al.*, “The Downs and Ups of the SNAP Caseload: What Matters?” SSRN, December 1, 2016, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3052570](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3052570).

entirely and undermine the program's role in promoting opportunity for those who are working and seeking to save for the future.



**Native Village of White Mountain**  
**IRA Tribal Council**  
**P.O. Box 84090**  
**White Mountain, AK 99784**  
**TELEPHONE: (907) 638-3651 & FAX: (907) 638-3652**

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October 30, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows state to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Option under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset tests helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State. Most of the households in White Mountain don't qualify for SNAP because of the houses, boats, or other vehicles they own or being just over the income threshold.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like the Native Village of White Mountain. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are elevated. There are families that have 6-8 individuals in the household and they need food at least twice per month and we are always in support of giving them food because they have a lot of children who are hungry. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB 196 and SB 149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Best Regards,

Mary D. Charles

President, Native Village of White Mountain



## Nome Community Center, Inc.

**Post Office Box 98  
Nome, Alaska 99762**

**Phone: 907-443-5259  
Fax: 907-443-2990  
[epalmero@namecc.org](mailto:epalmero@namecc.org)**

October 10, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

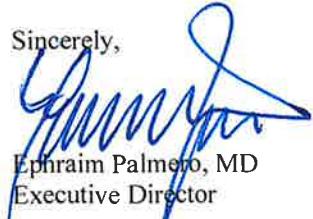
Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State. Several of our Food Bank clients have fishing cabins and fishing boats and gear that was weather damaged hence they were ineligible upon asset test determination.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Nome Food Bank. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. The current surging numbers in our Food Bank operation has increased from less than 1,000 to 1,335 households! SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Best,

Sincerely,

  
Ephraim Palmero, MD  
Executive Director

*Service to the People of the Bering Strait Region since 1910*

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Yesterday (10/25/2023) the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Economic Research Service released its report: **Household Food Security in the United States in 2022**. The 2022 data is sobering, showing that 1 in 7 people, including 1 in 5 children, in the U.S. live in food insecure households. This is an increase of more than 30% and 40% respectively from the previous year, the highest rate and number since 2014 and the largest one-year increase since 2008.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Southeast Alaska Food Bank. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated.

*USDA's Household Food Security Report for 2022 Shows Individuals Experiencing Food* - The number of people living in food insecure households in the United States in 2022 increased to 44 million, including 13 million children, according to a report released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This is an increase of 31% for all individuals and 44% for children from the previous year, the highest rate and number of individuals and children since 2014 and the largest one-year increase in food insecurity since 2008.

The Southeast Alaska Food Bank distributed a record breaking, 581,500# of food this past Fiscal year. The most in our 27 year history! We are on pace to exceed that mark this year.

SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

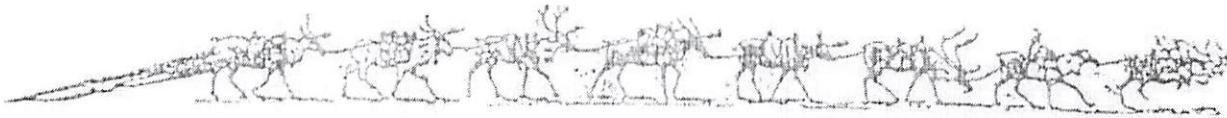
Best,

Chris Schapp – Executive Director

Southeast Alaska Food Bank – Juneau, Alaska

# STEBBINS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 71002 Stebbins, AK 99671  
Phone: 907-934-2393/2653 Fax: 907-934-3560  
Email: [tc.wbb@kawerak.org](mailto:tc.wbb@kawerak.org)



10/10/2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State. Some families have a hard time waiting for SNAP to be approved due to the income threshold plus the screening and interview time. They still struggle towards the middle and end of the month to support a large family.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Stebbins Community Association. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. Stebbins is a small rural village, and like most rural villages it has a limited number of job opportunities that residents can apply for and work. Also, the cost of freight that is flown in increases the cost of food that is sold at the local stores, making it harder to afford to support families in times of need. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Best,

Lydia Raymond-Snowball



Stebbins Community Association

# Native Village of Unalakleet



October 10, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel:

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCS) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

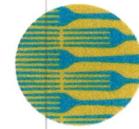
Option under BBCS will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps household – often seniors- with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State. Clients with boats that are needed for transportation and food gathering are necessary in Alaska due to our state being mainly a coastal state. The return of salmon has been scarce and also the ADF&G closing salmon fishing across our western area has made our resident seek assistance from SNAP and foodbanks, if they are available. I have not seen our people as food insecure as they have been for the past two years. Many of our community members are just barely over the income threshold and have been denied access to food.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like the NVU Food bank. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated as explained in the above paragraph. The Native Village of Unalakleet is running a small program and now we have had to increase our services to a larger food bank system in order to keep up with the need. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HP 196 and SP 149 to reduce hunger in Alaska for our elders and children and to eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance and save the State of Alaska money.

Sincerely,

Frank Katchatag  
President



*Upper Susitna*  
**FOOD PANTRY**

16004 Walsted Road

PO Box 277

Talkeetna, Alaska 99676

[uppersusitnafoodpantry@gmail.com](mailto:uppersusitnafoodpantry@gmail.com)

907-733-3358

[uppersusitnafoodpantry.org](http://uppersusitnafoodpantry.org)

11/08/2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under the BBCE program offer targeted assistance to low-income working families and seniors. By raising the gross income limit, the program primarily benefits working families with children, who often have multiple expenses such as childcare, housing, and utilities, making it challenging to afford a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households, particularly seniors, who have modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while also reducing the administrative burden on the state.

The proposed legislation is being introduced at a time when food insecurity levels are already high and increasing every day. When Alaskans who require assistance are unable to receive SNAP benefits, they often turn to food banks and pantries such as the Upper Susitna Food Pantry. As a pantry, we have limited resources and the increasing demand is forcing us to make difficult choices regarding the frequency and amount of food we distribute to families each month. The Upper Susitna Food Pantry is the only available resource in the area we serve, and these tough decisions not only impact the families in need but also affect the well-being of our entire community. **Snap is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to eliminate hunger and food insecurity throughout the state** and any measures that can be taken to improve access and remove barriers will improve the well-being of families and our state as a whole.

We support using HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Thank you,

LouAnne Carroll-Tysdal  
Executive Director  
Upper Susitna Food Pantry  
907-733-3358



33955 Community College Drive, Soldotna, AK 99669 • PHONE: 907-262-3111 • FAX: 907-416-7623

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Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

We recently had a client, a family of 4, both parents are working, and they are saving to move out of a shelter. A family gave them an older car so they could both get to work on time and the gift of the car put them over allowable assets. How can they get ahead and live independently when they cannot have reliable transportation to their jobs? We had another client lose benefits because their income went over by \$200.00.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Kenai Peninsula Food Bank. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. With high inflation and dramatic decrease in TEFAP Food availability, our ability to provide needed nutrition is more and more limited. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Meyer".

Greg Meyer, Executive Director

Kenai Peninsula Food Bank

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like **The Chugiak Eagle River Food Pantry**. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. We are hearing many stories of very slow processing of SNAP applications and that has helped to drive our numbers up. We are currently seeing 140-150 family's month. Our Saturday distribution is also seeing about 10% increase, to 250 folks per month. There is no question the lack of SNAP is increasing food insecurities and requiring more food to be distributed through our Food Pantry operations to satisfy hunger needs. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Best,

Lynn Kile

Volunteer Director

Chugiak Eagle River Food Pantry



**Alaska Food Policy Council**  
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[www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org](http://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org)

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### Operations & Finance Director

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Evie Witten, *Anchorage*

November 3, 2023

**Subject: Appreciation and Support for HB 196 and SB 149**

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Food Policy Council to express our heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering dedication to addressing the critical issues of food security and nutrition in Alaska. We commend your proactive approach in introducing House Bill 196 (HB 196) and Senate Bill 149 (SB 149), which advocate for the implementation of Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in our state.

The Alaska Food Policy Council has a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by Alaskan communities and are committed to developing evidence-based strategies that promote food security, Alaskan agriculture, and equitable access to nutritious food. The implementation of BBCE, as outlined in HB 196 and SB 149, aligns with our organization's vision for a more resilient and food secure Alaska. By simplifying the SNAP application process and ensuring access to vital nutritional support for vulnerable populations, these bills not only improve the lives of Alaskan residents but also offer substantial benefits to the state. The streamlined process would lead to significant cost savings and enhanced efficiency for the Division of Public Assistance, allowing resources to be allocated more effectively, ultimately benefiting both the government and the citizens it serves.

AFPC stands in full support of HB 196 and SB 149, and we applaud your leadership and tireless advocacy. We will continue to follow these bills and work to support your efforts. If we can provide additional information to help you move these bills forward, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to the positive changes that these bills will bring to Alaska.

Kind regards,

Robbi Mixon

Executive Director, Alaska Food Policy Council



Re: HB 196 and SB 149  
Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility

Dear Senator Giessel and Representative Mina:

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet, a critical element of child development. Removing the asset test helps households with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

This legislation comes at a time that food costs are climbing, with nearly a third of children nationwide affected. The Kids Count Alaska 2022 report found that 11% of children in Alaska are facing food insecurity, with much higher rates in off the road system regions, such as Bethel, Skagway, and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Census Area. Continuous access to resources, such as SNAP, reduces stress in families and acts as a prevention factor to child abuse and neglect. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's prevention ecosystem to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TJS".

Trevor J. Storrs  
President/CEO  
Alaska Children's Trust



3601 C Street, 1420 | Anchorage, AK 99503  
1-866-227-7447 | Fax: 907-341-2270  
[aarp.org/ak](http://aarp.org/ak) | [alaska@aarp.org](mailto:alaska@aarp.org) | [@aarpalaska](https://twitter.com/aarpalaska)  
[facebook.com/aarpak](https://facebook.com/aarpak)

January 8, 2023

Rep Genevieve Mina  
Alaska Legislature  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB196 Support

Dear Representative Mina:

In 2020, nearly 9.5 million adults age 50 and older lacked consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life due to inadequate financial resources. Older adults may face life challenges as they age such as experiencing unexpected or high health care costs, job loss, or the death of a spouse or other loved one. This may result in financial instability and make it difficult to afford food.

Food insecurity has significant negative impacts on older adults, particularly on their health. Older adults who are food-insecure are more likely than their food-secure counterparts to have limitations on activities of daily living, have conditions like diabetes and depression, and experience heart attacks.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as the nation's largest domestic nutrition assistance program provides financial assistance to eligible individuals and families with low incomes to purchase food, including over sixteen thousand Alaskan SNAP households with adults 50+ in 2019, half of which are 60 and over. SNAP households with 50+ Alaskans have an average monthly income of \$1,039 with 75% of them falling below the federal poverty level.

AARP supports implementing broad-based categorical eligibility which this bill implements because it is associated with higher participation in SNAP among adults age 60 or older, and has been in place for more than 20 years in many states.

**AARP Alaska supports HB196 to protect the food and financial security of aging Alaskans.** On behalf of the fastest growing senior population in the nation and our 77,000 AARP Alaska members, and for the benefit of all Alaskans, we thank you for your leadership on this important issue for older Alaskans.

Respectfully, Marge Stoneking  
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska



October 27, 2023

Senator Giessel  
Representative Mina  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK

RE: HB196/SB149 - SUPPORT

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

On behalf of the American Heart Association, thank you for introducing HB196 and SB149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These bills will allow states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test also helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

SNAP participation is estimated to reduce the likelihood of a household being food insecure. States that have adopted SNAP-supportive policies, like broad based categorical eligibility, generally have more SNAP-eligible participation than do states without these policies. Policies that make SNAP easier to access increase participation in the program, food insecurity is reduced, and fewer children and families go hungry.

This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need. It is for the abovementioned reasons we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Morgan".

Jamie Morgan  
Sr. Region Lead, Government Relations



4600 Debarr Road, Suite 201, Anchorage, AK 99508 • (907) 222-7300 • Fax (907) 258-1091 • cssalaska.org

3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Resource & Navigation Center

Brother Francis Shelter

Clare House

Complex Care

Family Disability Services

Homeless Family Services

Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services

Alaska Office for Refugees

St. Francis House Food Pantry

Supportive Family Services

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

I am writing on behalf of Catholic Social Services (CSS) to express our strong support for H.B. 196 and S.B. 149, which aim to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Catholic Social Services is dedicated to supporting vulnerable Alaskans on the path to permanent stability. Annually, we assist over 10,000 children, families, and individuals through various programs, including St. Francis House, one of the largest food pantries in the state.

Since our establishment in 1966, we've worked to combat hunger in our community, and in recent years we've observed a continued rise in food insecurity. When vulnerable Alaskans are unable to access SNAP, they turn to vital services like St. Francis House. Since January 2023, St. Francis House has provided food to over 1,200 new households, with more than 120 households served daily, marking an unprecedented demand. Hunger is a pressing reality in our community, and implementing BBCE for SNAP is a vital step in meeting this urgent need.

BBCE expands SNAP access, primarily benefiting working families struggling with the costs of childcare, housing, and utilities. The simultaneous removal of the asset test alleviates the extensive administrative burden on the Division of Public Assistance. These asset tests penalize families striving to increase income and savings—crucial steps toward self-sufficiency. Eliminating this test empowers families to build assets and is particularly beneficial for seniors, who often rely on essential savings.

Thank you for the introduction of HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE). We wholeheartedly support this legislation and anticipate Alaska joining the 44 other states already utilizing BBCE in their anti-hunger efforts.

Sincerely,  
Robin Dempsey

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Dempsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Robin" on the top line and "Dempsey" on the bottom line.



Maplebear Inc. d/b/a Instacart  
50 Beale Street, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94105

### Letter in Support of HB 196 / SB 149

"An Act relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program; and providing for an effective date."

Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

On behalf of Instacart, this letter is to express our support for HB 196 and SB 149 - implementing Broad Based Categorical Eligibility for SNAP.

The Alaska State Legislature is taking great strides to help alleviate food insecurity across the state by introducing HB 196 and SB 149. This action empowers the Division of Public Assistance to implement cost-effective measures while ensuring more families can access the food and supplies they need.

For the past decade, Instacart has harnessed the power of technology to provide fresh grocery delivery and pick-up to families across all 50 states and DC, reaching more than 95% of US households, including 90% of households experiencing food insecurity. We're proud to be the first online grocery marketplace to accept EBT SNAP in all 50 states. Everyone deserves access to food, and that's why we support efforts to modernize nutrition assistance programs like SNAP, which extend a lifeline to food insecure households.

HB 196 and SB 149 will implement the broad-based categorical eligibility, which will eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for many households. This will help food insecure populations, particularly seniors and families with children, receive uninterrupted access to SNAP while reducing administrative costs for the state. Children in particular face long-term health consequences from a lack of reliable nutrition, such as iron deficiency, anemia, asthma, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.<sup>1</sup>

Instacart is proud to partner with the Food Bank of Alaska to advocate for this legislation, as we know food banks play a vital role in ensuring our most vulnerable community members don't go hungry. We also work with food banks like the Food Bank of Alaska to leverage our technology and our reach to help address food and nutrition insecurity on a local level. Last year we launched [Community Carts](#), a service which reimagines traditional food drives by allowing people to donate and deliver most-needed items to local food banks through the Instacart platform. Alaskans rely on the Food Bank of Alaska and many other food pantries, and unfortunately, needs vastly outweigh available resources due in part to the rise of inflation. This legislation comes at a critical time, and speedy passage would deliver much-needed relief to many Alaskans.

For these reasons, we support HB 196 and SB 149 to reduce hunger in Alaska and eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance. We look forward to continuing this important work on expanding food access for Alaskans in a smart and efficient manner.

Sincerely,

Tiffani Alvidrez  
Regional Policy Manager, West  
Instacart

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nokidhungry.org/blog/five-things-know-about-summer-hunger-united-states>

# Bread Line, Inc.

PO Box 73715  
Fairbanks, AK 99707  
907.452.1974  
[breadlineak.org](http://breadlineak.org)



*Stone Soup Cafe · Stone's Throw Job Training · Stone Soup Garden · Kids Cafe*  
*"feeding people & affirming lives"*

October 12, 2023

Dear Representative Mina & Senator Giessel,

Thank you both for introducing HB 196 & SB 149. Your respective bills help move Alaska forward in starting Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps).

This targeted assistance, focusing on low-income working families & seniors, will protect vulnerable Alaskan households from facing preventable hunger. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have additional life expenses such as childcare, housing, & utilities, leaving them unable to afford the good food necessary for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test will help Alaskans – often seniors – who have modest savings or other assets remain qualified for the assistance they need. In our industry, the SNAP asset test & gross income eligibility limits are often called the “benefits cliff” – meaning that already struggling Alaskans fall off a metaphoric cliff when they are denied SNAP. We can take better care of our elders & families by joining the 44 other United States in adopting BBCE in Alaska.

When Alaskans who need assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they turn to food banks, pantries & soup kitchens like Bread Line. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already high. Since the onset of last year’s SNAP backlog, the Bread Line has been serving record numbers of Alaskans while facing diminishing donations for our anti-hunger work. It has been an enormous blow to follow so quick on the heels of a multi-year pandemic. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska’s anti-hunger network meet the need where it’s at.

You have the Bread Line’s full support for HB196 & SB149. Reducing hunger in Alaska, eliminating administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance & saving the state money is in all of our best interests. Thank you again for introducing your bills.

Earnestly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hannah C. Hill".

Hannah C. Hill  
Bread Line, Executive Director

January 8, 2024

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

We wish to thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within SNAP. Congregation Sukkot Shalom, in partnership with the Juneau Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, provides free food for those in need every Saturday during our open food pantry. Over the two and a half years we have been in operation, we have seen significant increases in the number of people coming by to secure food for their families. Some share the frustration they experience with Alaska's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We support this legislation for the following reasons:

- Eliminating the asset test and raising the gross income eligibility limits for certain households will especially benefit the working families with children we see each week.
- Removing the asset tests will also help the seniors with little savings who also come to our pantry to stock up on food for the week.
- Reducing the workload for eligibility technicians at the Division of Public Assistance will make SNAP work better and more efficiently in Alaska.

SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network made up of volunteers like us. We support your efforts to reduce hunger in Alaska and eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance.

Thank you for your sponsorship of this necessary legislation,

Joyanne Bloom

Food Pantry Co-Coordinator

Libby Bakalar

Co-President

Shari Paul

Co-President

Board Members of Congregation Sukkat Shalom



Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

Not only have I seen the faces and heard the cries of families who couldn't afford to feed their families, I have experienced those same issues in my own life. When I was offered the job of running the Copper River Native Association Food Bank, I had people telling me that they and their children would not have been able to eat, if it wasn't for the food bank. I have heard my children cry themselves to sleep because they were hungry and there was nothing I could do about it because we didn't even have a can or bag of beans in the cupboard. I promised my children and myself that I would do everything in my power to prevent anyone from having to go through that again. I am keeping my promise by writing to you today.

Many households have old cars in their back property that will never be able to run again. These are included in the current asset tests, usually resulting in either rejection or reduction of SNAP benefits. Even if a household owns a couple of long guns to use of hunting or fishing equipment, these items can be the cause of rejection or reduction of SNAP benefits even though they are being used to help the household become self-sufficient.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Copper River Basin Resource Council – CRBRC - (formerly known as the Copper River Native Association Food Bank). In fiscal year 2021, CRBRC served over 550 individuals comprising over 250 households. Last fiscal year, we served nearly 850 individuals comprising over 450 households. As you can see, this legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Best,

Irene M. Brooks

Copper River Basin Resource Council

October 18, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like **Copper River Basin Resource Council**. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. We have had about one-quarter of our clientele complain this past year about not having enough money for food because they have not been able to receive SNAP. We serve close to 300 people per month. Many of those folks come in specifically for protein. We were able to supplement the food that we receive from the Food Bank of Alaska by purchasing high cost items such as butter and hamburger. However, that little bit of extra protein is not enough to sustain a family of four for a whole month. There have been a number of families that have come to our Food Bank in tears because their situation has been so dire. When we were able to provide food for them, they were so grateful for the help. Many of our clients have needed to come in more than once a month for food. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

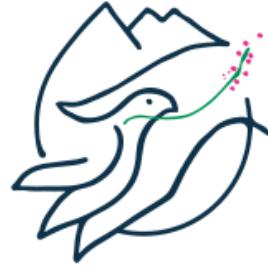
Best,

Michelle LeBlanc

Copper River Basin Resource Council



Girdwood Chapel & Turnagain Community Services  
[www.girdwoodchapel.com](http://www.girdwoodchapel.com)  
(907) 783-0127  
PO Box 1068 / 102 Heavenly Valley Dr.  
Girdwood, AK 99587



November 25, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel (CC Representative Shaw),

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

Here in Girdwood, we are constantly seeing individuals and families at our food pantry who are waiting on delayed SNAP applications, or being bumped off due to seasonal bonuses or cyclical employment. We recently worked with a family earning too much to access SNAP, but living in tents because they couldn't afford rent.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like Girdwood Chapel / Turnagain Community Services. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. We are serving more people each month than in 2022 or even 2021, while facing higher food prices and lower donations. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Sincerely,

Rev. Nico Reijns

Girdwood Chapel and Turnagain Community Services

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet.

Removing the asset test helps

households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets to still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

Helping Hands Food Bank is located in Tok, Alaska. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need. For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money. The Board of Helping Hands Food Bank greatly appreciates your support.

I can speak from personal experience as to the great blessing this proposed legislation would bring to Alaskans if it passes. The SNAP program has been such a critical blessing for my family ever since I had to take my 8 children and flee to the Center for Non-Violent Living in Fairbanks, Alaska to protect my children and me from escalating domestic violence from their father and my then-husband. Our family has since relocated to Tok. We are so thankful for the SNAP program!

However, because of the strict rules for household income that do not allow for savings, if we set aside a few savings to cover sudden vehicle expenses, etc. we risk losing our food stamp benefits. As a result, we have had to ask for additional outside assistance many times over the past several years. The incoming child support my family receives is very meager, and with two of my children having turned 18, the child support has dipped down to an amount that does not quite cover our outgoing bills and expenses. Though I have two less children at home, inflation has risen to match this difference. These mentioned expenses do not include money for food. So we still heavily rely on SNAP benefits.

This summer was the date for renewal of our SNAP benefits. I sent in the paperwork before the deadline, but to date I have yet to receive any communication from them on

our case status. Incoming SNAP payments stopped. No explanation for why was provided.

Thankfully, due to learning frugality, we were spending a monthly amount of money on food that was less than what was coming in for us from the program, so we are still living off of the balance on our card. However, when that money runs out soon, the only option I see readily available is to turn to the local Food Bank that I currently volunteer at. Our Helping Hands Food Bank already struggles to find sufficient food supplies for those we currently serve. I worry that as more Alaskans face a hunger crisis from the economic downturn, we will be unable to meet the new demands placed on our food bank. I am hoping that my family can begin receiving SNAP benefits again soon and avoid placing added strain on our local food bank.

Thank you for your time and service,

Elisabeth Garber

907-987-8805

Volunteer, Board Member

Helping Hands Food Bank



## Juneau Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

November 24, 2023

Dear Representative Mina and Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State.

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries, such as the Saturday morning food pantry at the local Temple, an interfaith project operated by the Juneau Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and the Congregation Sukkot Shalom. Our pantry opened in May 2021, intending to serve low income families in need who live in the immediate neighborhood. In the last year, with the closure of Helping Hands, we have become a regular stop for people coming from all over Juneau and Douglas. We are completely staffed by volunteers, who collect food twice a week from the Southeast Alaska Food Bank (the cheapest place for pantries to obtain food but by no means free) and open the Pantry doors every Saturday morning. Our two small congregations also willingly bear the cost of providing this service as a tangible expression of faith in action.

Other than capturing how many mouths a shopper is feeding, our pantry is a “no questions asked” pantry, allowing shoppers the dignity of anonymity and of selecting the foods they want from items on our shelves. Last Saturday morning, we served more folks than ever before, with 37 shoppers feeding 100 people. On multiple Saturday mornings, we’ve heard many shoppers express worry about food insecurity in general and frustration with the SNAP program specifically.

SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska’s anti-hunger network to meet the need. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Thank you for your sponsorship of this important legislation,

*Jetta Whittaker*

Jetta Whittaker, Food Pantry Coordinator

Juneau Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

**From:** [Mary Rosenfield](#)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#); [Rep. Genevieve Mina](#); [Sen. James Kaufman](#); [Rep. Julie Coulombe](#)  
**Subject:** SB149 and HB 196  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 21, 2023 3:31:11 PM

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Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am writing to express my strong support for H.B. 196 and S.B. 149, which aim to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

*I am a 27 year resident of Sugar Circle, Anchorage, Alaska and have volunteered for three years at the St. Francis Food Pantry of Catholic Social Services. Over the past three years, the number of families needing food has increased significantly (very long car lines) and we volunteers are scrambling to get enough food ready and bagged for each day's clients.*

Food insecurity is on the rise and BBCE can stop it. Implementing BBCE expands SNAP access and eligibility. This primarily benefits large working families, who often have high competing expenses such as childcare, housing, and utilities.

The implementation of BBCE also removes the asset test, relieving the heavy administrative burden on the Department of Public Assistance. These asset tests penalize families striving to increase income and savings—crucial steps toward self-sufficiency. Eliminating this test empowers families to build assets and is particularly beneficial for seniors, who often rely on essential savings.

H.B. 196 and S.B. 149 would make improvements to Alaska's federally funded SNAP program while also reducing the workload for eligibility technicians at the Division of Public Assistance.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB 196 and SB 149 to expand SNAP access, alleviate administrative burden, and support working families and seniors in our community. **Thank you for all you do.**

Sincerely,

Mary Rosenfield

9430 Sugar Circle, Anchorage

**From:** [Anchor Point Food Pantry](#)  
**To:** [Rep. Genevieve Mina](#)  
**Subject:** BBCE  
**Date:** Thursday, October 19, 2023 7:34:15 PM

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Dear Representative Mina,

Thank you so much for introducing HB 196 and SB 149 to implement Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows states to eliminate the asset test and raise the gross income eligibility limits for certain households.

Options under BBCE will provide targeted assistance for low income working families and seniors. Raising the gross income limit primarily benefits working families with children, as they are more likely to have competing expenses like childcare, housing, and utilities, leaving them unable to afford the necessary foods for a healthy diet. Removing the asset test helps households – often seniors – with modest savings or assets still qualify for the assistance they need, while reducing the administrative burden on the State. We have several seniors that come to the pantry for being over-resourced and trying to make ends meet. One had two vehicles, but one old vehicle was to plow their driveway and take trash to the dump. Another was too ill to focus enough to sell her old stuff. Another had to close their business because it brought them just over the line. Another, their vehicle was too new, but they needed it to get to doctors' appointments! Meds aren't taken into consideration – Do I eat, or do I take my medicine?! Do I eat or pay the rent? Do I eat or buy gas to get to work? Young families too!

When Alaskans needing assistance are not able to receive SNAP, they show up at food banks and pantries like the Anchor Point Food Pantry. This legislation comes at a time that food insecurity levels are already elevated. In a population of less than 2000 we have over 300 households a year that need our assistance between the lack of jobs and increase of rent, food, and gasoline. SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network to meet the need.

For these reasons, we support HB196 and SB149 to reduce hunger in Alaska, eliminate administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance, and save the state money.

Thank you for listening,

Melissa

*Melissa J Martin*  
APFP President, E.D.  
(907) 299-8437