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**From:** Hannah Hill <hannah.hill@breadlineak.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 11, 2024 3:27 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please pass HB 196: BBCE for Alaskans  
**Attachments:** BBCE.pdf; Meals.png; BBCE Leave Behind.pdf

Dear House Finance Committee -

Everybody eats. There are not many truisms more accurate than that simple statement. Yet, accessing daily food has been difficult for Alaska's most vulnerable citizens. The rolling SNAP backlogs did real harm to your constituents who struggle to have enough to eat. Tens of thousands of Alaskans were left waiting for months to receive the benefits they qualified for. Alaska even received an official warning from the USDA that we risk losing federal funding for our food stamp program because of the "inefficient & ineffective administration."

You have also recently received a lot of testimony from anti-hunger professionals talking about Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) – an effective, proven system that reduces the administrative burden on the State by streamlining SNAP program processes while protecting Alaskans from the "benefit cliff," helping them achieve economic stability. It's win/win.

As targeted assistance, BBCE helps low-income Alaskans from facing further 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 "benefit cliff" – meaning that already struggling Alaskans are pushed off a metaphoric cliff when they are denied SNAP over a few dollars or a working vehicle. We can take better care of Alaskan elders & families by joining the 42 other United States (& two territories) in adopting BBCE here.

SNAP is a crucial program that helps Alaska's anti-hunger network meet the need where it's at. Nationally, for every one meal that an organization like mine serves, SNAP provides ten. The local charity network cannot provide what SNAP should, but over these last many months we have had to try, taxing our resources & pushing staff to the limits of capacity.

Food relief organizations in your district - & across Alaska - are facing alarmingly elevated levels of community hunger that are being significantly compounded by a decline in local donations & the federal commodity programs. Despite an incredible lift from the Division of Public Assistance, both in processing SNAP applications & knocking down the backlog, ongoing food insecurity looms large for many of your most vulnerable constituents. Everybody eats.

Here in Fairbanks, the Bread Line served a record-breaking 59,581 meals in 2023. That's an astonishing 25% increase over the year before & is largely reflective of the local impact that the statewide SNAP backlogs made

It is going to take time for the harm that was done to stabilize. Already, 2024 has recorded a 9% increase over 2023. We are serving more food to more people than ever before & cannot sustain this level of service. My organization is having to purchase food to meet the need – something we cannot maintain for much longer. Making sure that Alaskan can access SNAP is an effective & efficient way to

help anti-hunger organizations across our state.

Reducing hunger in Alaska, eliminating administrative burdens on the Division of Public Assistance & saving the state money is in all of our best interests. Please prioritize passing HB 196 this session.

If you have any questions about how SNAP makes a difference in your community - or how the BBCE would positively assist this process - please do not hesitate to reach out. The charitable food network in Alaska are your professional resources. We are here to help you understand this critical danger in our communities & highlight your part in Alaska's anti-hunger work. Passing HB 196 will help make sure that every Alaskan has enough to eat every day.

Thank you for your time,

-Hannah C. Hill

*(they/them/theirs)*

Executive Director

Bread Line Stone Soup

907.452.1974

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



Hunger is every day

[please help support the Bread Line](http://breadlineak.org)

*The Bread Line operates in the traditional & unceded territory of the Lower Tanana Dene' peoples. We recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous Alaskans & are thankful for their leadership & ongoing stewardship in caring for this beautiful place*

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**From:** Robbi Mixon <director@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 01, 2024 3:35 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Rachel Lord  
**Subject:** Support for HB196 - BBCE

Chairs Johnston and Foster, and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Robbi Mixon, I live in Homer and am testifying in my role as Executive Director of the Alaska Food Policy Council in strong support of HB 196, to implement Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) within Alaska's SNAP program.

AFPC is a nonpartisan, statewide organization working through connection, information, and advocacy to strengthen Alaska's food systems. We work closely with the Legislature and the Governor, as well as with partners like the Food Bank of Alaska the Alaska Food Coalition (of which we are a member), on efforts to decrease hunger and ensure all Alaskans have access to food.

At the Alaska Food Policy Council, we are committed to developing and supporting evidence-based strategies that promote food security, Alaskan agriculture, and access to nutritious food. The implementation of BBCE, as outlined in HB 196, aligns with our organization's vision of healthy, secure, abundant food systems that feed all Alaskans. By simplifying the SNAP application process and ensuring access to vital nutritional support for vulnerable populations, this bill would not only improve the lives of Alaskan residents but also offer substantial benefits to the state. The streamlined process would lead to significantly increased efficiency in processing applications for the Division of Public Assistance, allowing resources to be allocated more effectively and with fewer errors, ultimately benefiting both the government and the citizens it serves.

We at AFPC strongly support HB 196. Thank you for hearing this bill and taking public testimony and we encourage you to move HB 196 from committee as soon as possible.

Kindly,  
Robbi Mixon

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Robbi Mixon, Executive Director  
Alaska Food Policy Council  
[director@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org](mailto:director@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org)  
PO BOX 173, Homer, AK 99603  
907-756-3930

[Book some time to chat!](#)

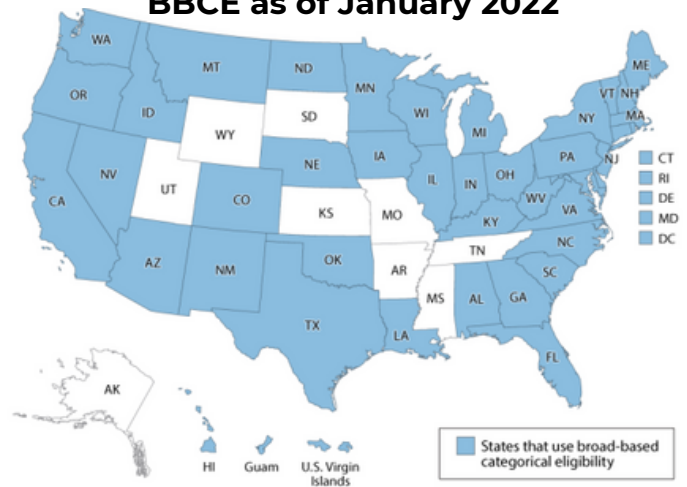
**TAKE THE \$5/WEEK ALASKA GROWN CHALLENGE**

By spending \$5 a week on Alaska Grown products, you'll help local farmers, boost the local economy, increase Alaska's food security, and eat better too.

**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 \$3,125 per month (net) for a family of four. Families making just \$1 more per month lose their benefits.
- **Households cannot have assets (including money in the bank) exceeding \$2,750**, or \$4,250 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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*Stone Soup Cafe · Stone's Throw Job Training · Stone Soup Garden · Kids Cafe*

*"feeding people & affirming lives"*

May 11, 2024

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Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H.C. Hill', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hannah C. Hill  
Bread Line Executive Director