

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Appropriations Priorities for Food and Nutrition Programs

The federal nutrition programs are a critical support for tens of millions of households — helping them put food on the table during times of need. Investing in hunger prevention and relief also makes smart fiscal sense. Hunger increases health care costs, lowers worker productivity, harms children’s development, and diminishes students’ educational attainment. These negative impacts can be minimized with robust funding and support for the federal nutrition programs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. It responds quickly and efficiently to changes in need, whether due to local or national economic downturns or natural disasters. Unfortunately, SNAP benefit amounts are inadequate to help people maintain a healthy diet throughout the month. SNAP food benefits average about \$6.20 a person a day. Research has linked diminished food budgets later in the month with a drop-off in caloric intake, lower school performance, and an increase in hospitalizations due to low blood sugar.

Congress should strengthen and protect SNAP through fiscal year 2026 appropriations, including blocking any efforts to limit food choices for SNAP participants.

Improve Technology:

- Currently, criminals are preying on SNAP participants and stealing their benefits. SNAP participants have no protection from this theft and have no replacement benefits — which causes children, older adults, and people with disabilities to go hungry. Congress must fully fund replacement benefits and provide funding for states to make the transition to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) chip cards.

Child Nutrition Programs

Child nutrition programs provide quality nutrition and help support education, child care, and education and enrichment activities for children across the country, especially children from families with low incomes. These programs help improve children’s overall health, development, and school achievement.

In addition to maintaining robust eligibility structures, Congress should take the following actions to keep the child nutrition programs strong:

School Meals:

- Fully fund school meals programs for all K–12 students in fiscal year 2026: Congress should provide **\$10 million** for school meals direct certification grants to reduce paperwork for schools and **\$35 million** in school equipment grants to help school districts build their capacity to prepare healthier and more cost-efficient meals on site.
- Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): Expand CEP so that more schools are able to offer school meals to all their students by increasing the multiplier that determines federal funding from 1.6 to 2.5 and creating a statewide option.
- Reinstatement funding for local food purchasing for schools and child care.
- Farm to School and Early Care and Education: Provide **\$14 million** to support farm-to-school efforts and to continue expanding Farm to Early Care and Education settings.
- Oppose any efforts to block stronger school meal nutrition standards.

Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT):

- Provide **\$126 million** to waive the administrative match requirements and **\$50 million** for technology and implementation grants to support states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations.

Child Care Meals:

- Continue to provide **\$10 million** for the Child and Adult Care Food Program’s (CACFP) nutrition and wellness education and program efforts. These funds are crucial for providing materials, training, and support to state agencies and program operators to bolster nutrition knowledge among child care providers.
- Team Nutrition: Provide **\$25 million** for Team Nutrition funding, the primary resource for promoting healthy eating

and nutrition education in child nutrition programs. These funds assist schools, child care centers and homes, and community-based sponsoring organizations to successfully implement healthier meal patterns.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):

- Fund WIC at a level that will ensure every eligible family who applies for the program can receive the benefits. Appropriators should work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to monitor trends in participation and food costs to ensure sufficient funding. Included in the WIC appropriation should be longstanding set asides for WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (**\$90 million**), infrastructure and technical assistance (**\$16 million**), and management information systems to support modernizing the program (**\$50 million**).
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP): Support FMNP at **\$20 million**. FMNP provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants.

21st Century Community Learning Centers:

- Provide **\$2.09 billion** for the program, which is the largest source of funding for afterschool and summer programs.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- **TEFAP Commodities:** Provide **\$472.3 million** for TEFAP food purchases to provide emergency food assistance to individuals in need. Nutritious TEFAP foods are an essential resource for food banks and other local emergency food providers.
- **TEFAP Storage and Distribution and Infrastructure Funds:** Provide **\$100 million** for TEFAP storage and distribution and **\$15 million** for the TEFAP Infrastructure Grants Program.

Older Adults Nutrition Programs

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):** Fund CSFP at a level that will provide the flexibility to maintain caseloads and responsible program expansion to serve eligible older adults experiencing food insecurity.
- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (SFMNP):** Provide **\$21 million** for SFMNP to provide seniors with low incomes coupons for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.
- **Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs:** Provide **\$1.6 billion** for the OAA programs. The home-delivered meal and congregate nutrition programs are vital sources of nutrition for older adults in communities around the country. Congress must increase funding for these programs to keep up with the escalating demand for services.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

- Provide **\$342 million** for food purchases and to cover administrative costs, **\$5 million** for demonstration projects for Tribal organizations to enter into contracts to procure food for FDPIR packages, and **\$5 million** for traditional foods market development, authorization, and funding for participants to receive FDPIR and SNAP.

Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program

- Provide **\$2 million** to encompass the work fellows perform to design, implement, and evaluate nutrition assistance programs in communities across the country.