

California SNAP Stakeholders Denounce Harmful MAHA Proposals to Restrict & Control the Food Choices of SNAP Participants

Congress, Governor Newsom, and CA Legislature urged to continue maximizing SNAP food choices & take added steps to fight root causes of poverty-related hunger

PASADENA, CA, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- We are deeply concerned about the consequences of the policy proposals put forth in today's [Make Our Children Healthy Again \(MAHA\) report and strategy](#) announced by Health & Human Services Secretary Kennedy, specifically the recommendations to restrict the types of food that can be purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits. While we share the goal to support the health and well-being of all Californians, efforts to do so through policies that limit individual choice and dignity are misguided, ineffective, and demeaning.

The SNAP program was created based on the finding that the limited food purchasing power of low-income households contributes to hunger and malnutrition. That remains a concern today: more than 1 in 5 Californians (8.8 million), and more than 1 in 4 households with children, struggle with food insecurity, with deep inequities for Black, Immigrant, Indigenous, and other populations. Poverty-related hunger is the most detrimental nutrition outcome, with both short-term and life-long harms associated with even one experience of hunger.

[The USDA's own data confirm](#) that the high price of fresh, healthy foods is the primary barrier that households face. SNAP benefits still only average around \$6 per person per day, and has been shown to be inadequate to purchase a modest diet in every California county. Studies have shown that even a modest increase in benefits reduced food insecurity and improved the purchase of healthier and more nutritious food. Conversely, when emergency food benefits during COVID ended, [the trend reversed as households, especially those with children](#), could not afford sufficient food.

A fundamental success of SNAP is that it is a public-private partnership that enables participants to purchase groceries at mainstream stores, in privacy, according to their household's needs. Authorized retailers must already follow strict rules to ensure only eligible food is purchased. Issues with the cost and capacity of coding each and every item sold so as to be in compliance could result in a loss of stores accepting SNAP benefits cards, and further decrease access in rural and urban communities that already suffer from food deserts. Individuals with certain medical conditions may no longer be able to purchase the items they need for their medication

or specific dietary needs.

The proposal to limit food choice serves only to stigmatize SNAP shoppers in the grocery aisle, and take away the autonomy of those with the fewest resources to purchase food for themselves and their families. It is deeply unpopular, as the public is well aware that this is simply an attempt to police the choices of people experiencing poverty.

Governor Newsom said it best: the MAHA agenda is to Make America Hungry Again. That is clear in the historic cuts to SNAP and other basic needs in H.R. 1, and the same is true for this report, which does nothing to improve healthy food access or reduce poverty-related hunger.

Earlier this year, 51 organizations commented on Governor Newsom's Executive Order directing the California Department of Social Services to make recommendations regarding ways to limit the harms associated with "ultra-processed foods" and to reduce purchases of ultra-processed foods and/or foods with synthetic food dye or other additives. We continue to support interventions grounded in the well-established and deep body of evidence that shows challenges with accessing "healthy" foods - for all Californians, not just CalFresh recipients. Access to healthy food is a broad societal issue that will require innovative approaches across multiple sectors, as it not only impacts people living on low incomes.

We are proud that the California Legislature passed and Governor Newsom signed into law AB 553, which makes clear the State's commitment to maximizing food choices and food access for all CalFresh recipients.

All California policymakers must reject the ineffective and mean-spirited SNAP restriction policies in the MAHA report. California Members of Congress must maintain SNAP choice by ensuring that these proposals are not adopted in the Farm Bill, Appropriations, or other vehicles.

The Governor and Legislature must lead by continuing to invest in meaningful, evidence-backed solutions that improve households' ability to access and afford healthy foods. These include timely investments to address the harms from H.R. 1, increasing SNAP benefit allotments known to be inadequate to last the month, such as by expanding the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit set to pilot later this year, and providing incentives for those shopping with CalFresh to purchase fresh produce, such as through the Market Match program.

We look forward to working with our state and federal officials on these and other true solutions to achieving food and nutrition security for every Californian.

Linda Swank

GRACE & End Child Poverty CA

+1 626-356-4206

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Facebook](#)
[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/847613941>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.