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Anti-Hunger Advocates Warn of Increased Food Insecurity in April Due to Drop in SNAP Benefits

IOWA (March 24, 2022) — Anti-hunger advocates across the state are warning of increased food insecurity coming in April due to a loss in benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Iowa as Food Assistance. The change is the result of Iowa ending its Public Health Disaster Emergency Proclamation on February 15, 2022.

SNAP participants will see a loss in benefits of at least \$95 per household in April, with many experiencing an even greater reduction in benefits. The average SNAP benefit for individuals will drop from \$2.65 per meal to an estimated \$1.52 per meal. Total SNAP benefits issued in the state of Iowa will [decrease by an estimated \\$29.5 million](#), or 42.6%. [290,545 Iowans received SNAP benefits](#) in the month of February.

“Starting in April, my SNAP benefits will be reduced by the state from \$250 to \$20 per month,” said Des Moines resident **Tara Kramer**. “Quality of life relies on access to healthy food. My nutritional requirements are currently being met only because I have been able to purchase food appropriate for me with the additional SNAP benefits I have been receiving. Food is medicine, and my doctors have noticed a difference in my overall well being. \$20 a month means I’ll be getting 22 cents to put towards each meal. I am terrified of my health declining, especially during a pandemic.”

“My family of four will see our SNAP benefits decrease by \$254 in April. The additional SNAP benefits we have been receiving for the past two years have reduced stress and allowed my family to eat way more fresh fruits and vegetables and buy convenient food items like baby puffs, fruit bars, and cheese sticks for my kids,” said Iowa City resident **Cecelia Proffit**. “We also recently lost the monthly enhanced child tax credit payments in January and are feeling the financial pinch, especially with gas and heating costs rising. We’ll have a lot less money to spend on food now. If we can’t buy it with SNAP, we can’t buy it.”

“We will be choosing between medication and food, and we know several other seniors that are in the same position,” said a woman from Butler County who receives SNAP benefits and wishes to remain anonymous. “My husband has mesothelioma and I am on disability. With

inflation and the cost of food like it is, we need the pandemic-level SNAP benefits to continue, but we are seniors, so I guess the government just wants us to dry up and blow away.”

“My SNAP benefits are being reduced to \$20 per month, which will leave me no choice but to give up medical treatment, or medicine, or whatever else it takes to make a meal,” said a senior living in Sac County who does not wish to be identified. “You would think that a person like me who worked two to three jobs all my life and raised two children on my own would be treated much better in my latter years. With inflation and a simple loaf of bread being close to \$3.50, it will be peanut butter for me. I will have no other choice. It’s a sad day in Iowa.”

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has allowed states to issue Emergency Allotments for SNAP, granting the maximum possible benefit amount to program participants. Iowa began issuing Emergency Allotments to SNAP participants in April 2020. A state must have an emergency declaration in place to receive and distribute Emergency Allotments, and USDA has granted states a one-month phase-out of these additional benefits once an emergency declaration has been lifted. [March was the phase-out month of SNAP Emergency Allotments in Iowa.](#)

Food pantries and other anti-hunger organizations are also concerned about the increased traffic they will see as people turn to them to make ends meet. Strained supply chains and inflation have led to higher food prices and transportation costs for anti-hunger organizations as well as consumers, making it more expensive to provide the same level of services.

“Families we serve are already feeling the financial pinch with rising food costs. When April comes, we are bracing for some of the highest needs we’ve ever been asked to meet,” said **Kaila Rome**, Executive Director at the North Liberty Community Pantry. “It will take a community effort of volunteers, donors and advocates to weather this policy-induced storm.”

“We’re expecting to see a fairly sizable increase in food pantry visitors over the next couple months,” said **Matt Unger**, Chief Executive Officer of the Des Moines Area Religious Council. “We’ve seen this happen at our Food Pantry Network previously when there have been changes to SNAP benefits. We saw it with the sunset of increased SNAP benefits after the 2009 recession and we saw it again with the government shutdown in January 2019. We’ve been preparing for this and trying to make sure both the people we assist and those who support our work see it coming.”

“Food pantries in Iowa are already struggling to secure enough food to meet the existing need,” said **John Boller**, Executive Director of the Coralville Community Food Pantry. “Unless something changes, once SNAP allotments decrease significantly in April, we will very likely see longer lines, food shortages, and worker burnout in the nonprofit anti-hunger sector.”

Anti-hunger advocates encourage the public to support their local food bank, food pantry, food rescue organization, and other anti-hunger organizations through donations of funds, food, and volunteer time. The Iowa Hunger Coalition also encourages members of the public to contact

their state legislators and ask them not to create additional hurdles for lowans to access SNAP and other public assistance programs, such as those proposed in [House File 2438](#).

“Just as lowans will be losing hundreds in monthly SNAP benefits, they may also be facing additional red tape in a new system that is designed to deny benefits to people who are eligible,” said **Natalie Veldhouse**, chair of the Iowa Hunger Coalition. “Bills like House File 2438 vilify lowans experiencing hunger. Hunger is a policy choice that is shaped by our state’s low wages, stifled workers’ rights, and policy history of excluding people of color from economic opportunity.”
