

Summer SNAP for Children: A Tool to Feed Hungry Kids in Rural Communities

Over the course of the past decade, No Kid Hungry's work to end child hunger has shown that not all communities are alike, and that interventions to address hunger must incorporate local perspectives and realities in order to solve urgent challenges faced by families. For families with low income living in rural areas, the geography of hunger often includes food deserts without access to full-service supermarkets; higher prices for food that is available; and high transportation costs associated with limited infrastructure. These challenges often compound with other issues including limited childcare and healthcare options, and can be especially acute during the summer months when children lose access to school breakfast and lunch.

The good news is that some states are adopting policy innovations that would make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families at risk of hunger, while also providing a meaningful economic boost to rural communities across America. One new policy is to provide additional assistance to families with low income to purchase groceries when school is out of session. Last year, Maryland passed legislation – the [Summer SNAP for Children Act](#) – that will provide an additional \$30 per summer month and an additional \$10 in December for each child in households already receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The additional benefit will be loaded onto existing electronic benefit cards during the applicable months. This modest increase in grocery assistance will help ensure that children have access to the nutrition they need during the summer and winter break when school breakfast and lunch are unavailable and access to summer and afterschool meal programs can be challenging in rural communities.

Maryland's Summer SNAP for Children program is modeled after the federal Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) demonstration project operated by USDA since 2011. To date, the program has served more than 250,000 children around the country, largely in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Summer EBT relies upon existing SNAP or WIC delivery models in the states and Indian territories in which they operate, and, like Maryland's program, delivers additional benefits per summer month per child to an electronic benefit card for participating families to purchase groceries. [USDA's own research](#) reveals that this approach has proven effective as a solution to address food insecurity among children during the summertime. Indeed, Summer EBT has been shown to reduce the incidence of very low food security among children by up to one-third.

Providing nutrition assistance through models like Maryland's Summer SNAP for Children and the federal Summer EBT program are appealing because they tap into existing food supply chains and generate additional revenue for food retailers and local economies. For example, USDA's Economic Research Service has estimated that [every dollar in SNAP benefits generates \\$1.54 in Gross Domestic Product](#). Additionally, SNAP participants generally spend their benefits soon upon receipt, injecting resources quickly into the local economy. The study also found that every \$1 billion in SNAP benefits generates 480 full-time jobs and \$32 million of income for US agriculture. As a program that builds on SNAP, Summer SNAP for Children is an innovative solution to both reduce the incidence of child hunger while boosting the health of the rural food retail landscape.

States have the power to implement policy solutions, like Maryland's Summer SNAP for Children, to alleviate child hunger in rural and hard-to-reach communities. The challenge we face in this country is not about the production of *enough* food, but rather making sure that children and

families have reliable, dignified, and convenient ways of accessing the food they need to thrive. By investing in nutrition access for children in rural communities, states can ensure that kids have the support they need to break free from the cycle of poverty, laying the groundwork for future prosperity.

ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY

Share Our Strength is a nonprofit organization committed to ending hunger and poverty in the United States and abroad. Through our [No Kid Hungry](#) campaign, we help end hunger and food insecurity in America by connecting children and families to the federal nutrition programs for which they are eligible. We believe that every child deserves equal opportunity to grow up healthy and achieve their full potential.