



Take Action:
INCREASE SNAP
for Seniors & People
with Disabilities

Spring 2022
Advocacy Toolkit



TOOLKIT PURPOSE

A guide for taking collective action around Pennsylvania's proposed increase to the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and people with disabilities, including advocating to legislators and engaging supporters.

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BACKGROUND INFO

WHAT IS SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. For every one meal that food banks provide, SNAP provides nine. SNAP helps millions of low-income Americans put food on the table by providing a monthly benefit that is based on household size, income, and other factors such as housing and heating costs. SNAP is targeted to help our most vulnerable neighbors, largely serving households that include children, seniors, and people with disabilities. While SNAP is a highly effective program, the minimum benefit (just \$20 per month) does not stretch far enough.

THE PROPOSAL

While SNAP is federally funded, Governor Wolf has proposed utilizing \$14.333 million in state dollars to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for households with elderly or disabled members by \$15 per month. This would bring the federally funded minimum benefit of \$20 per month up to \$35 per month. We hope to see this proposal included in the final FY22-23 state budget passed by the General Assembly.

WHY IT MATTERS

SNAP reduces the probability of food insecurity among older adults and individuals with disabilities with low incomes, improves mental health, frees up income for expenses like housing and medications, and is associated with lower health care costs. However, particularly as we face record inflation, the minimum SNAP benefit of \$20 per month is simply too low to help those on a limited budget afford adequate nutrition. To limit the depth and duration of hardship, and to help close the SNAP participation gap among older adults, Pennsylvania should increase the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and those with disabilities to \$35/month.

TALKING POINTS

Investing state dollars to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for these vulnerable populations is a good policy because:

- 1) Pennsylvania seniors and those with disabilities living on fixed incomes simply cannot make ends meet
- 2) Providing a more adequate benefit can increase SNAP participation and draw down additional federal dollars to support food security
- 3) Access to SNAP is associated with reduced health care costs
- 4) SNAP is good for the local economy

Check out our

FACT SHEET

& share with your legislators, fellow advocates, and others who want to learn more

Help Low-Income Seniors & Those with Disabilities Afford Food:
Pennsylvania should increase the minimum SNAP benefit

Background: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federal hunger safety net program. SNAP is especially important in helping low-income older adults and those with disabilities achieve food security. However, the minimum SNAP benefit of \$20 per month is simply too low to help those on a limited budget afford adequate nutrition. The low benefit amount also contributes to low SNAP participation among those who may be hesitant to reach out for help and reluctant to tackle the paperwork required to enroll in the program.

Proposal: Governor Wolf's FY 2023 budget includes a proposed \$14.333 million to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for households with elderly or disabled members by \$15 per month. This would bring the federally funded \$20 per month benefit up to \$35 per month. Investing state dollars to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for these vulnerable populations is a good policy for many reasons:

- 1) Pennsylvania seniors and those with disabilities living on fixed incomes simply cannot make ends meet.**

SNAP benefits are based on a household's income, size, and allowable expenses. Economically insecure seniors and those with disabilities — those with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level — are eligible for SNAP. But they may qualify for only the \$20 minimum benefit, which is not sufficient to cover rising food costs.

- Inflation has soared over the past year at its fastest pace in more than 40 years, with costs for food, gasoline, housing, and other necessities squeezing older Pennsylvanians and those with disabilities.
- In early April, the Labor Department reported that its [consumer price index jumped 8.5% in March from 12 months earlier](#) — the biggest year-over-year increase since December 1981.
- While Social Security recipients received a 5.9% percent bump in their monthly checks this year, this is well below the amount needed to cover rising costs.

- 2) Providing a more adequate benefit can increase SNAP participation and draw down additional federal dollars to support food security.**

Older adults' participation in SNAP is staggeringly low. According to USDA, only 45% of Pennsylvania seniors who qualify for SNAP are receiving benefits. Furthermore, there is a pervasive myth that older adults who qualify for SNAP only receive the minimum benefit, but this is largely untrue.

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[CLICK HERE FOR FACT SHEET](#)

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Sign and share the Organizational Sign-On Letter



Join our Social Media Storm May 25



Raise Awareness on Social Media



Keep an eye out for future actions!
We'll be sure to keep you informed

ORG. SIGN-ON LETTER

We are circulating an organizational sign-on letter to the PA Senate and House Appropriations Committee chairs. Please add your organization's support, and invite others to sign-on as well! **Sign on by May 20th**

Dear Senator Browne, Senator Hughes, Representative Saylor, and Representative Bradford,

We the undersigned, [add # reference - more than XX/nearly YY] organizations from across the Commonwealth that provide food, health care, housing, and many other supports and services to seniors and those with disabilities, write to ask that you allocate \$14.333 million in the FY2022-23 state budget to increase the minimum SNAP benefit by \$15 per month for approximately 78,000 households with elderly or disabled members. The allocation of these state dollars would enable Pennsylvania to bring their federally funded minimum SNAP benefit of just \$20 per month up to \$35 per month.

To learn more about the proposal and key reasons to support it, please see this [fact sheet](#).

Older adults who are food insecure often experience negative mental and physical health conditions such as diabetes, depression, limitations on activities of daily living, hypertension, heart disease, and asthma. Food insecurity also disproportionately affects people with disabilities due to the obstacles many of them face, including higher than average rates of unemployment, lower than average incomes, and costly medical expenses. Using state dollars to bolster SNAP is a wise investment, as evidence shows that SNAP plays a role in improving food security, health outcomes, and dietary intake, and contributes to health care savings.

As you know, COVID-19 has not only posed significant health risks to older adults and individuals with disabilities but has also produced a growing economic crisis that has been exacerbated by world events. For low-income seniors and persons with disabilities, the main barrier to accessing nutritious foods is a lack of resources. The simple fact is that the \$20 minimum SNAP benefit does not stretch far enough due to food inflation. With your help, the program can be even more effective for Pennsylvania seniors and individuals with disabilities who receive only minimal SNAP support. Adding \$15 per month to the minimum benefit will help them purchase nutritious foods that are essential for their health and well-being, as well as enable them to avoid dangerous trade-offs caused by income constraints, like skipping medication, that can lead to damaging and costly health consequences.

We urge you to ensure that Pennsylvania's low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities have the support they need to put food on the table and remain healthy members of our communities. Thank you for your consideration of this critically important matter.

View the sign-on letter document [HERE](#)

Fill out this [GOOGLE FORM](#) to sign on

SOCIAL MEDIA STORM

ON MAY 25TH

11AM-2PM

Take to Twitter and Facebook to share why you support raising the minimum SNAP benefit!

What You Can Do:

- Post on behalf of your organization, or as an individual constituent
- **Tag your elected officials** and tell them why Pennsylvania should increase the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and people with disabilities. Include a call to action
- Make it personal! Use real-life examples to explain how the current minimum benefit affects you and/or the people you serve, and how raising it would make a difference
- Add the hashtag #raiseSNAPminimumPA

EXAMPLE

@Philabundance supports raising the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and people with disabilities from \$20 to \$35/month because no one should have to choose whether to "eat, treat, or heat." @[ElectedOfficial] please urge appropriators to include this proposal in the final state budget #raiseSNAPminimumPA

SAMPLE SOCIAL POSTS

Social media is a powerful tool for community-building and advocacy, helping people engage with others, share resources, and stay informed.

Many people (including legislators) are not aware of the proposed SNAP minimum increase, nor how it could benefit vulnerable populations.

We need to make some noise! In addition to the Social Media Storm, use social media throughout the month to spread the word about this proposal and why it should pass!

[CLICK TO TWEET](#)

SNAP reduces the probability of food insecurity among low-income seniors, improves mental health, frees up income for expenses like housing and medication, and reduces nursing home and hospitalization admissions and costs. Its a wise investment to #raiseSNAPminimumPA

[CLICK TO TWEET](#)

PA's seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes simply cannot make ends meet. With soaring inflation, the minimum SNAP benefit (just \$20/month) is not enough to cover rising food costs. It's time to #raiseSNAPminimumPA Learn more - bit.ly/SNAPIncreasePA

[CLICK FOR MORE SAMPLE SOCIAL POSTS](#)

QUESTIONS? CONTACT ADVOCACY@PHILABUNDANCE.ORG

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