



2023 Farm Bill Policy Priorities

The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) is an interfaith organization with a mission of working together to meet basic human needs for the greater Des Moines community. The DMARC Food Pantry Network consists of 15 partner food pantries, numerous mobile food pantry locations, and a home delivery program. Last year, over 53,000 unique individuals used the DMARC Food Pantry Network. DMARC strives to provide nutritious and culturally appropriate food to all who use a food pantry.

DMARC also works to “shorten the line” at food pantries by advocating for effective policies that will reduce food insecurity, address root causes of poverty, and improve the lives of the people of Iowa.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is our nation’s largest food assistance program. DMARC supports policies that would improve benefit amounts and reduce barriers to participate in SNAP.

Improve Benefit Calculations

- > Use the USDA’s Low-Cost Food Plan to calculate SNAP benefits, raising benefit amounts by 30%, including the minimum benefit amount.
- > Eliminate the cap on the Excess Shelter Deduction to better assist households with high rent and utility costs.
- > Create a standard medical deduction of \$140 in every state for elderly and disabled people.
- > Expand the ability to deduct excess medical expenses (greater than \$35/month) to all SNAP participants.
- > Introduce a “young child multiplier” to increase maximum benefit amounts by 20% for households with children between the ages 0 and 5.

Reduce Barriers to Participate

- > Eliminate the three-month time limit for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents.
- > Eliminate the federal asset limit for SNAP.
- > Raise federal income eligibility for SNAP from 130% FPL to 200% FPL, and allow states to expand income eligibility up to 250% through Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility.
- > Repeal the lifetime SNAP ban for individuals with a felony drug conviction.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- > Reauthorize and increase funding for TEFAP food purchases to adjust for inflation and ensure food banks can continue to assist people facing food insecurity.
- > Increase funding for TEFAP food storage and distribution.
- > Continue funding TEFAP infrastructure grants to help cover the costs of refrigeration and fuel for food bank partner agencies.
- > Increase funding for the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program to support local growers while providing food to people in need.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)

- > Expand investment in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP, formerly FINI) to increase efforts to expand access to fresh fruits and vegetables, such as the Double Up Food Bucks program and produce prescription program.
- > Create a new tier of grant funding to support statewide expansion of nutrition incentive programs, with programs at the statewide scale not competing with funds dedicated for current tiers. The new tier of grants would be 100% federally funded, with no local matching funds required.

SNAP-Ed

- > Continue funding SNAP-Ed to strengthen nutrition education programs for individuals enrolled in SNAP.
- > Increase flexibility for program activities, evaluation, and allowable expenses to increase community engagement in SNAP-Ed.

SNAP Employment & Training (E&T)

- > Continue investing in SNAP E&T to provide program participants with free opportunities to build skills and gain education.
- > Continue operating SNAP E&T as a voluntary program, and not a mandatory one.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

- > Increase funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to support farmers growing vegetables, fruits, and nuts for human consumption.
- > Extend USDA's food procurement and distribution programs to nonprofits beyond the TEFAP system to increase access to locally grown nutritious food in underserved areas.
- > Re-evaluate USDA's nutrition procurement program to prioritize domestically-grown fruits, vegetables, and nuts.

Questions? Contact DMARC's Policy and Advocacy Manager Luke Elzinga at lelzinga@dmarcunited.org or (515) 520-4741.