



# DENVER SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY COUNCIL



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## RESOLUTION NO. 001-2020

### Supporting Hunger Free Colorado's SNAP recommendations

**WHEREAS**, the Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council (SFPC) is one of Denver's Mayor-appointed Boards and Commissions; and

**WHEREAS**, one key purpose of the SFPC is to "Provide Recommendations to the City on Regulations and Policies" by identifying and recommending regulatory and policy changes that would support the Denver Food Vision and Action Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the SFPC is tasked with providing the Mayor and city staff recommendations that are both responsive to the Mayor/city and stakeholders by identifying interested parties, identifying pro and con arguments, identifying key stakeholders, and assessing the impact of the policy and legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, the SNAP Utilization working group has recommended SFPC sign on to support the letter sent to Colorado congressional delegates by Hunger Free Colorado in regard to protecting and improving SNAP benefits; and

**WHEREAS**, the SFPC members voted to approve support of this letter in April 2020;

**NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED** that the SFPC officially signs on in public support of this letter [here](#).

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*Official Record of SFPC Decision:*

Vote: yes; no; abstain

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Dear Colorado Congressional Leaders,

First, thank you for your leadership at this uncertain time. The actions of our federal delegation are helping all of us cope and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We greatly appreciate the timely work of our Congress. The passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act has and will ensure thousands of Coloradans can access the nutritious food they need. It allowed for needed flexibilities for food and nutrition programs and funding for programs for older adults and disabled communities. Passage of The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act last week will provide vital economic and health safety resources for all of us and included vital funding for important nutrition and food access programs including WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), and funding for food for Native American communities.

As you continue to work to ensure resources and increased flexibility to help Coloradans, we are proud of how our food security community has been responding. Our food banks and food pantries have been changing their processes to safely distribute as much food as possible out to their communities. Every day they are working creatively to get food out to families and individuals who need it. With districts closed, our schools are creating new models, and utilizing every flexibility provided to them, to ensure children can maintain access to nutritious food. Community organizations, counties and state agencies have stepped up to help Coloradans find resources and enroll in programs like SNAP and WIC.

SNAP plays a critical role in providing for low-income families' food needs and responding to economic crises. In the Families First Act, Congress provided for emergency allotments to boost some households SNAP benefits and in the CARES Act added \$15.5 billion to cover enrollment growth, but these are short-term fixes to a long-term problem. The need families have for expanded food access will extend beyond the next few months. The Great Recession of 2008-2009 lasted 18 months and we anticipate the rebuilding after this unprecedented downturn will take even longer.

We need a package that provides for the long-term nutritious food needs for families as they build their lives back after this crisis. Over the past three weeks unemployment claims in Colorado have soared 737%, with more than 65,000 Coloradans applying for unemployment insurance. The jobs lost include many that lack leave policies, putting more families at risk of falling into poverty and in need of food security programs like SNAP and WIC. Even after the public health emergency relaxes, it will take time for both small and large businesses to rebuild and hire back workers.

To ensure Colorado families have the nutritious food they need, we ask that you support these policies in the next COVID-19 relief package:

1) Increase SNAP benefit levels by 15% throughout the course of the COVID-19 emergency to cover the costs of food for families. The USDA has authorized a temporary increase in household benefits to the maximum level through May 2020. When benefits return to their normal level, the average SNAP family in Colorado will receive \$1.29 per meal per person.<sup>1</sup> Families cannot maintain healthy diets at this level. This proposal would increase the maximum benefit by around \$100 monthly for a family of four so long as COVID-19 continues to disrupt the economy.

2) Increase the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30 a month. As noted above, the USDA is temporarily allowing states to increase SNAP benefits to the maximum level for all eligible household members. This provision is only authorized until the end of May 2020, and with the constantly rising costs of food, the standard \$16 minimum will not cover even supplemental food needs. The minimum benefit needs to be increased so long as COVID-19 continues to affect the economy in order to avoid the tradeoffs between food and other necessities that Coloradans are forced to make when their benefits are inadequate.

3) Include provisions to suspend finalizing or implementing any rule that would result in families losing

*benefits and access to food. Three regulations that the Administration is pursuing would end SNAP benefits for 3 to 4 million people and shrink them for about 6 to 7 million others. These three changes to SNAP have the potential to withdraw close to \$60 million in federal benefits from Colorado annually, and remove tens of thousands of Coloradans from SNAP.*

*4) Increase administrative funding for state and county agencies to meet increased demand for SNAP and to implement vital program flexibility. County agencies in Colorado have reported a 70 percent increase in SNAP applications since the COVID-19 crisis began. In addition, innovative state flexibility such as the Pandemic EBT response as benefits for students formerly participating in their school's free and reduce lunch program will require additional administrative support to successfully implement. We call upon on Members of Congress to consider the expanding burden on state and county agencies charged with successfully operating these programs during this time of increased need and to ensure that our local agencies are properly equipped to continue to operate these programs efficiently and expeditiously.*

*5) Request that USDA expand online purchasing and delivery of food for households paying with SNAP EBT cards. While a nation-wide expansion of SNAP online purchasing will take resources and effort from USDA to ensure that stores are capable of using the technology needed and that safeguards are in place to protect SNAP beneficiaries such an expansion would greatly help SNAP households. We have attached a letter from Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) that we applaud and request our own delegation follow his lead.*

*Data shows that SNAP is a counter-cyclical program that helps those impacted by national and local recessions and serves as an economic stabilizer.<sup>2</sup> We can utilize it now to protect the health and well-being of families, support Colorado's agricultural sector and help Colorado's economy respond to this crisis. Research shows that during an economic downturn, each \$1 of SNAP benefits leads to between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in total economic activity in the community.<sup>3</sup> Families will use these resources to buy food, helping our producers, manufacturers, and retailers. SNAP is a common-sense program that helps people to move forward and economies to rebound.*

*Again, we thank you for your leadership. Your work to respond to this crisis and how you do so next will be felt for decades to come. We urge you to respond with policies and program support that is fair and equitable and will help move all of us forward. We ask that you strengthen our food security programs as detailed above to respond to this pandemic.*