

SNAP Access Resolution Promoting Food Equity and Nutritional Security in the United States

- ***Nutrition insecurity has been an ongoing concern***

WHEREAS, a healthy diet consisting of proper nutrients and adequate caloric intake can promote healthy childhood development, as well as help people achieve and maintain good health throughout their lives;[\[1\]](#) and,

WHEREAS, nutritionally inadequate dietary intake is a leading contributor to the development of chronic cardiometabolic diseases;[\[2\]](#)and,

WHEREAS, food insecurity, a common cause of inadequate nutrition, is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a “household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food;”[\[3\]](#) and,

WHEREAS, food insecurity can quickly contribute to disparities in chronic disease outcomes, especially for cardiovascular diseases;[\[4\]](#) and,

WHEREAS, a healthy diet is important during pregnancy as it can impact the child’s ability to maintain a healthy weight later in life;[\[5\]](#) and

WHEREAS, nutrition security refers to “an individual or household condition of having equitable and stable availability, access, affordability, and utilization of foods and beverages that promote well-being and prevent and treat disease;”[\[6\]](#) and,

WHEREAS, there is growing consensus that U.S. food policies and programs should focus on “nutrition security” in addition to the broader scope of “food security;”[\[7\]](#)and,

WHEREAS, an essential part of nutrition security is access to culturally appropriate nutritional food that fits the needs of peoples across culinary and religious traditions;[\[8\]](#) and,

WHEREAS, the current model the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) uses to calculate a household's benefits assumes that every family will spend 30 percent of their net income on food,^[9] leading to only families with absolutely no income to receive full SNAP benefits and the majority of SNAP participants to receive lesser assistance; and,

WHEREAS, this Association calls for a multi-faceted approach, promoting and encouraging nutrition education, and funding to address childhood obesity; and,

WHEREAS, this Association further renewed its call to eliminate food deserts and strengthen nutrition security,

WHEREAS, continuing to emphasize these issues as matter of nutrition security will help to expand and strengthen existing U.S. food assistance policies and programs in a more equitable manner; and,

- ***Nutrition insecurity inequitably impacts people of color and religious minorities, and new technologies can be part of the solution***

WHEREAS, challenges to consuming a healthy diet are perpetuated by lack of access to a broad array of affordable and culturally-relevant food options, structural racism, and long-standing inequitable policies disproportionately affecting communities of color;^[10]

WHEREAS, research suggests that caregivers and children who participate in SNAP have improved birth outcomes, reduced childhood food insecurity (by up to 36%), and improved long-term child health;^[11] and

WHEREAS, in the latter-half of 2020 (at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic), 10.5% of U.S. households reported being food insecure, with rates of food insecurity at 14.8% for households with children, and 28.6% for households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold (or \$48,555);^[12] and,

WHEREAS, chronic disease disparities have been recognized to be driven by worsening socioeconomic disparities and the chronic stress that results from experiencing food insecurity or the poor dietary quality related to low

consumption of nutritious food and/or overconsumption of nutrient-poor foods,[13] commonly due to living in food deserts, including hard-to-reach areas, or with mobility challenges[14] or severe time constraints;[15] and,

WHEREAS, digital food access and delivery can help complement the financing initiatives for brick-and-mortar healthy food retailers in food deserts by providing more options for people who experience barriers to conventional, brick-and-mortar food access, because they live in an area where such retailers are economically infeasible or face non-geographical barriers;[16] and,

WHEREAS, the leading barrier to digital food access and delivery is lack of broadband,[17]

WHEREAS, another potential barrier to digital food access and delivery is lack of payment processing access for the unbanked, and;

WHEREAS, a final barrier to digital food access and delivery is that, although some culturally- or religiously-relevant food items are much more available online than in brick-and-mortar stores in many neighborhoods, many third-party seller marketplaces, such as independent grocers and farmer's markets that sell these relevant food items, are unable to accept and help SNAP recipients due to a complex application process with the USDA that mostly only large grocery retail chains are able to put resources toward;[18] and,

WHEREAS, accessibility to culturally- or religiously-relevant food items is a large factor in ensuring that food programs are equitable for all participants, as those who are unable to obtain food items that are culturally and religiously relevant to themselves are more likely to not participate in a program, which would actually have a harmful effect on those that the food programs are aiming to help;[19] and,

WHEREAS, the vast majority of SNAP recipients are non-white minorities,[20] which puts additional emphasis on making the food assistance program equitable for all; and,

WHEREAS, public-private partnerships with retailers, especially in food deserts, are critical to the success of federal nutrition programs; and,

- **Conclusions**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the African American Mayors Association recognizes that to equitably improve health and wellbeing, the U.S. government must invest in public-private partnerships with grocers and retailers, education over nutrition and nutrition programs, and policies that incentivize healthy food access and healthy eating; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the U.S. government should work to use technology to incorporate federal nutrition programs, specifically SNAP, more efficiently, into retailers' online platforms; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, state and federal funding and assistance should be increased to reduce lengthy waitlists and expand options to include more culturally appropriate food in an equitable manner and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SNAP online purchasing program should be translated from a pilot program to a secure and permanent program so that customers can continue accessing nutrition for their families from a wide range of online retailers; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SNAP online purchasing program's online payment interface should be accessible for the unbanked;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, states and localities should establish or expand SNAP incentive programs to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

[1] Lichtenstein AH et al. on behalf of the American Heart Association Council on Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health; Council on Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology; Council on Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention; Council on Clinical Cardiology; and Stroke Council. 2021 dietary guidance to

improve cardiovascular health: a scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2021; 144:e472–e487. doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000001031.

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[3] U.S. Department of Agriculture; Economic Research Service. Definitions of Food Security 2020. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/>. Accessed April 16, 2021.

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[6] Thorndike, Anne et al.; on behalf of the American Heart Association Advocacy Coordinating Committee. Strengthening US food policies and programs to promote equity in nutrition security: a policy statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2022; doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000001072.

[7] Thorndike, Anne et al.; on behalf of the American Heart Association Advocacy Coordinating Committee. Strengthening US food policies and programs to promote equity in nutrition security: a policy statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2022; doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000001072. And see, Mozaffarian D, Fleischhacker S and Andrés JR. Prioritizing Nutrition Security in the US. *Jama*. 2021;325:1605–1606.

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<https://biomedpharmajournal.org/vol8octoberspledition/culture-and-its-influence-on-nutrition-and-oral-health/>.

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<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

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[insecurity/#:~:text=Households%20with%20members%20holding%20down%20multiple%20jobs%20were,insecure%20than%20households%20with%20workers%20in%20full-time%20jobs.](#)

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[17] George, Caroline, and Adie Tomer. 2022. “Delivering to deserts: New data reveals the geography of digital access to food in the U.S.” Published by the Brookings Institution. May 11, 2022.

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[snap#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20about%2092%20percent,Native%20American%3A%20about%202%20percent.](https://frac.org/blog/new-usda-report-provides-picture-of-who-participates-in-snap#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20about%2092%20percent,Native%20American%3A%20about%202%20percent)