

The National Grocers Association (NGA) represents 21,000 independent community grocers and wholesalers across the United States. Independent community grocers account for 33 percent of all grocery sales, exceeding \$250 billion, and more than 1 million American jobs.

## ◆ ◆ What is SNAP Choice? ◆ ◆

Individuals using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to buy food have the freedom to choose the foods they want and need at the grocery store. This choice ensures families can shop with the same dignity as any other customer. This choice also allows grocery stores to treat SNAP recipients like other customers at the register and has helped create one of the most efficient and effective government assistance programs in existence.

## ◆ ◆ What will happen if SNAP Choice is Restricted? ◆ ◆

There are proposals to restrict SNAP choice intended to promote better health and reduce program costs, but restricting SNAP choice will do neither. **Restricting SNAP choice will ...**

### Increase Program Implementation Costs for the Government and Businesses

- ◆ The government will need to categorize more than 600,000 products, and thousands more each year, to create and maintain a food code determining what foods can be purchased with SNAP.
- ◆ Grocery stores will have to change point of sale systems for each of the over 200,000 items in store.
- ◆ Grocery store cashiers will become the food police, forced to tell parents what they should feed their families.

### Not Create Meaningful Public Health Outcomes

- ◆ Most SNAP transactions are split tender, meaning they are partially paid for out of pocket. Foods not allowed on the program will just be moved to out-of-pocket purchases and not change an individual's purchasing habits. This means a huge investment of public and private dollars will go to waste instead of being used for proven and effective programs like nutrition incentives.
- ◆ The diet of an individual on SNAP is not significantly different than the average American diet. Restrictions would punish people for needing assistance. To improve public health, nutrition incentives are more effective and can be targeted to high need communities.

### Reduce Program Flexibility which is the Key to its Success

- ◆ SNAP choice allows individuals with a variety of diseases and dietary needs to purchase the foods they need.
- ◆ SNAP choice allows the program to remain flexible during a supply chain shortage and declared emergencies. Restrictions would limit the program's ability to react to the changing needs of the community.

# At the HEART of the community.

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◆ **Transforming SNAP from an efficient government assistance program into one that requires more regulation and more bureaucracy – with no clear public health benefit – will harm SNAP participants, taxpayers, and businesses.** ◆

## ◆ ◆ **Congressional Action** ◆ ◆

Congress must take action to protect the SNAP program from disastrous restrictions that put participants and grocers at risk. **Congress must ...**

### **Oppose Appropriations Riders that Restrict SNAP Choice**

- ◆ In FY2024, an appropriations rider in the House Agriculture Appropriations package included a \$2 million pilot to restrict SNAP purchases to nutrient-dense foods in five states.
- ◆ This bill would likely lead grocers in pilot states that have stores on the border of non-pilot states to lose their SNAP business because participants are likely to shop across state lines. This puts those grocers at risk of going out of business as SNAP accounts for about 12% of grocery sales in the United States.
- ◆ Restrictions proposed in FY2024 could have restricted access to foods like peanut butter and jelly, deli meat, cheese, tortillas, chicken nuggets, and most canned vegetables and beans.
- ◆ Losing pantry staples would force SNAP participants to spend more time preparing food which they often do not have. SNAP participants deserve the same convenience as any other shopper.

### **Oppose the Healthy SNAP Act (S. 1485/H.R. 4058)**

- ◆ This bill proposes making SNAP like WIC with a restricted food list that participants can shop from.
- ◆ While WIC is a critical nutrition program for moms and babies, it is complex for grocers to implement. For reference, there are 259,000 SNAP retailers and only 41,000 WIC retailers. We would likely see an exodus of retailers from the SNAP program reducing access for participants. Additionally, participants in the WIC program receive a nutrition prescription from a counselor for their specific needs. Counselors for all 41 million SNAP participants would be budgetarily prohibitive.

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