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FEEDING COLORADO STATEMENT ON SNAP CUTS IN THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION BILL

Denver, CO - Last week, the U.S. Senate released draft language of a budget bill proposing \$211 billion in cuts from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through 2034.

That's the largest cut in the program's history. SNAP is a critical tool for reducing food insecurity, and these cuts would have devastating impacts on the most vulnerable communities. In Colorado, hundreds of thousands of people would lose assistance, inevitably leading to greater demand on food banks that are already stretched to their limits.

"Food banks are serving a record number of neighbors each month statewide," said Mandy Nuku, Executive Director of Feeding Colorado. "If the federal budget bill cuts SNAP this drastically, we'll see those numbers go up. Food banks are resilient and do whatever they can to support their communities, but the scale of need these cuts would generate cannot be met by them alone."

"Food Bank of the Rockies works with more than 800 Hunger Relief Partners to distribute enough food for 76 million meals throughout Colorado and Wyoming each year. Right now, we are already responding to the highest rates of food insecurity in over a decade — while managing rising costs and reduced federal food supplies and funding. We simply cannot absorb additional increased need that will invariably result from any cuts in SNAP benefits," said Erin Pulling, CEO of Food Bank of the Rockies.

"Our neighbors, particularly families with young children, are already struggling to make ends meet. This is exacerbated in rural areas where the cost of food is higher. Federal resource cuts would hurt them even more and worsen the hunger crisis in Colorado," said Bob O'Connor, CEO of Weld Food Bank.

The budget bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a 215-214 vote on May 22, and the Senate is expected to vote on it before July 4. The massive cuts to SNAP would come through cost-shifting to states and other structural changes to the program that will take benefits away from people who need it most.

The federal budget bill would:

Shift costs to states: Since its inception, SNAP has been fully federally funded, with the federal government covering 100% of the benefit costs and states contributing 50% of the cost to

administer the program. The budget reconciliation package requires states to pay a percentage of SNAP food benefit costs starting in 2028, with **Colorado's annual contribution for SNAP benefits estimated to be as high as \$195 million in addition to a 50% increase in administrative costs**. This would be a significant cost to Colorado that the state wouldn't be able to meet without raising taxes, cutting other critical programs, or making the difficult choice of **reducing SNAP access** – ultimately leaving many of our neighbors unable to afford the food they need.

Restrict SNAP for unemployed and under-employed parents and seniors: The budget bill subjects more people—including older adults up to age 65 and parents of children as young as 7 (and 10 in the Senate version)—to a harsh three-month time limit, requiring that they document 20 hours of work per week to receive benefits. It also eliminates existing exemptions for veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth. These changes would strip food assistance from Coloradans who may be working limited hours due to unique situations like home-schooling children, experiencing significant barriers to employment like not being able to secure employment that would cover the cost of childcare. The proposal limits states' ability to waive requirements when they experience extremely high unemployment rates in certain communities; this often results in an inability for people to access benefits even if there are no job opportunities for them.

Prevent SNAP from adapting to actual food costs: The “Thrifty Food Plan,” which is the basis for calculating SNAP benefits, would be frozen under the proposed bill, preventing any future updates regardless of new data on nutritional needs or rising food costs. SNAP benefit levels are already maxed out at about \$2 per meal, and these cuts would mean **all of Colorado's more than 615,000 SNAP participants would see an outsized inflation impact resulting in fewer groceries**. Annual adjustments to other nutrition assistance programs that respond to national socioeconomic conditions and are backed by regularly tracked data could be jeopardized, too.

“These changes would decrease people's ability to put food on the table each month, at a time when food prices are already high,” said Kim DaSilva, CEO of Community Food Share. “It would increase food insecurity to a level that our food bank would struggle to reverse.”

“Colorado food banks cannot replace the scale of meals provided by the SNAP program,” said Nate Springer, CEO of Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado. “While we provide food to hundreds of thousands of Coloradans each month, we are simply not equipped to handle the increase in demand that would result from reduced access to SNAP,”

As economic stress rises nationally, our **most vulnerable neighbors will feel the impact first and hardest**. Nonprofits will continue filling the gaps in service as best they can through

charitable donations and grant funding but are already struggling to keep up with the growing need.

“We are deeply concerned about these proposed cuts, as we’ve seen in the past that cuts to SNAP directly translate to increased lines at our food banks” said Amy Pezzani, CEO of Food Bank for Larimer County. “We’re hopeful that any future changes from Congress will benefit everyone who is already struggling.”

Contact: Mandy Nuku
Executive Director, Feeding Colorado
mnuku@feedingcolorado.org

Feeding Colorado is the partner state association of the five Feeding America food banks that serve Colorado and Wyoming. Member food banks include Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado, Community Food Share, Food Bank for Larimer County, Food Bank of the Rockies, and Weld Food Bank.