



**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COOK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Cook County Building, Board Room, 118 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois

New Items Agenda

Thursday, January 16, 2020, 10:00 AM

Second Set

[20-1209](#)

Sponsored by: ALMA E. ANAYA, Cook County Board of Commissioners

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION IN RESPONSE TO THE RISK OF SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFIT LOSSES FOR RESIDENTS OF COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, according to an August 2019 article in the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH), the SNAP program has demonstrably lifted participants out of poverty; and

WHEREAS, the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure found that SNAP benefits helped to lift 3.4 million people out of poverty in 2018; and

WHEREAS, the AJPH published a study in December 2019 which showed that sustained participation in the SNAP program significantly reduces food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, a May 2019 report by public health researchers in the journal Health Affairs showed that participants who lose SNAP benefits face increased economic hardship, increased food insecurity, and poorer health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 amended the SNAP eligibility criteria to require individuals aged 18-49 without children, who do not receive disability benefits, also known as "able-bodied adults without dependents" (ABAWDs), to work a minimum of 80 hours per month; and

WHEREAS, on December 5, 2019 the current federal administration changed SNAP rules, further restricting conditions under which the United States Department of Agriculture would waive the ABAWD work requirements and benefit time limit; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, removal of SNAP benefits through harsh work rules does not improve long-term unemployment, could harm those who are working but remain in need of food assistance, and would cut off critical food assistance to individuals in need; and

WHEREAS, underemployed or unemployed individuals in the ABAWD category who are unable to meet the work requirement, are limited to 3 months of SNAP food assistance in a 36-month period, and may be removed from SNAP despite their individual level of food insecurity, or the severity of their poverty; and

WHEREAS, while the State of Illinois has been able to waive the work requirement for particular areas

in the state based on unemployment rates, eligibility for that waiver is at risk in much of the State following new restrictions in the federal rule change; and

WHEREAS, all of Cook County has lost eligibility for a waiver due to the lower relative unemployment rate in the County as a whole, despite significantly varied unemployment rates in localities across the County; and

WHEREAS, approximately 50,000 SNAP program participants in Cook County are at risk of losing their benefits as a result of the ABAWD work requirement restrictions; and

WHEREAS, across Illinois, individuals who are in the ABAWD category are at risk of losing their SNAP benefits three months after April 1, 2020 due to the 2019 change in federal rules; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the current federal administration has proposed other SNAP rule changes which could result in fewer Cook County residents receiving SNAP, or in a reduction of benefits; and

WHEREAS, administrative rules that would drastically narrow the application of SNAP broad-based categorical eligibility are among the changes being proposed; and

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois uses broad-based categorical eligibility to create improved access to SNAP benefits for households in need; and

WHEREAS, the restriction of broad-based categorical eligibility creates an obstacle to SNAP benefits for working families and seniors, and threatens eligibility for free school lunches under the National School Lunch Program for low-income children; and

WHEREAS, Feeding America data shows that an average of 12% of Cook County residents face food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Cook County Food Access Plan identifies that particularly vulnerable localities within the County face food insecurity at rates measured to be 10%-40% above the County average; and

WHEREAS, the 3,337 businesses and 54 farmers markets in Cook County who are registered as SNAP retailers through the USDA risk sales losses, and local economies risk losses at a rate of up to \$1.54 for every \$1.00 in SNAP benefits lost by participants; and

WHEREAS, according to the Greater Chicago Food Depository, reductions in SNAP benefits are likely to increase food assistance needs, exacerbating the strain on the nonprofit emergency food system.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Cook County Board President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners oppose excessive barriers to the receipt of SNAP benefits for those in need of food assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Cook County President and Board of Commissioners encourage service providers and job training programs to expand their operations in order to improve access to exemptions and opportunities for eligible, food insecure adults at risk of losing SNAP benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Cook County President and Board of Commissioners remain committed to the principles of equity and access outlined in the 2015 Cook County Food Access Plan, the 2019 Cook County Committee on Addressing Bias, Equity, and Cultural Competency Final Report, and the Cook County President's Policy Roadmap.