



Legislative Agenda 2020-2021

Hunger Free New Jersey will continue to work to advance broad solutions to hunger, primarily focused on making it easier for struggling residents to receive food assistance and to have access to healthy food. In 2020, these overarching goals will be pursued through a variety of measures.

Feeding NJ Kids

Expansion of Summer Meals. The Summer Food Service Program provides federal dollars to feed children in the summer when school is out and hunger sets in for many children who rely on school meals. Some states supplement federal reimbursements to help make food healthier and offset operation costs for sponsors. New Jersey should do the same, providing a per-meal supplement for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks served.

Ban Lunch Shaming. No student should feel shame if his/her family falls behind on school meal fees. Legislation that was introduced in 2019 is being strengthened, with hopes that a bill will be approved in 2020. The bill should outlaw any type of “lunch shaming,” such as serving alternative meals or prohibiting students from participating in school activities.

Feeding NJ College Students

Make all Work-Study Count. To broaden the number of college students who can qualify for the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, aka food stamps), New Jersey should allow students who are registered for work/study assignments to qualify for SNAP, even if no job is available. Frequently, the number of available jobs falls short of the number of students approved for work/study. This would prevent punishing students who are willing to work but cannot find an approved work/study position.

Feeding NJ Senior Citizens & People with Disabilities

Provide a Standard Medical Deduction. When determining whether someone is eligible for SNAP and the amount of monthly benefits they can receive, many factors are considered, including medical expenses. Some states opt to provide a “standard medical deduction” to the elderly and people with disabilities. This simplifies the application process and often makes these vulnerable residents eligible for higher benefits. New Jersey must implement this common-sense approach to help the thousands of struggling elderly and disabled individuals who receive little or no SNAP assistance.

Feeding all Struggling NJ Residents

SNAP is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. New Jersey has taken strong steps in recent years to make this critical assistance available to all who need it. We’ve made progress but still have a way to go. These measures will help expand SNAP participation to all who are eligible:

Give SNAP Applicants Receipts. SNAP applicants frequently report that after filing documentation to verify income and/or expenses, they are told those documents were never received. This can happen weeks after filing the documents, delaying much-needed assistance. The county welfare agencies, which administer SNAP, must provide a receipt to all applicants for documentation submitted. This simple administrative step can help prevent serious delays in assistance.

Expand SNAP Outreach. SNAP reaches only about 70 percent of eligible individuals, leaving many who could benefit unserved. The state must expand SNAP outreach efforts. Currently, a combination of state and federal funds pay for outreach in only 13 of New Jersey’s 21 counties. Even in counties where contracted agencies conduct outreach, the staff and resources are severely limited. New Jersey should dedicate state funds to pay for adequate outreach. The state Department of Human Services should conduct an analysis to determine the amount of needed funds and the state Legislature and Governor should provide that amount.

Boost Funding for Healthy Food. In 2019, New Jersey initiated a small pilot to double the value of SNAP dollars for fresh fruits and vegetables purchased at certain retailers. This small program enabled some SNAP recipients to afford healthier food. New Jersey should expand this effort by allocating \$50,000 to provide this benefit to more New Jersey residents.

For more information, contact Adele LaTourette, alatourette@cfanj.org

or visit hungerfreenj.org.