

In 2023, with the support of our nationwide network of anti-hunger advocates and funders, the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) has made headway in advancing our [Strategic Plan to end hunger in America](#). [Hunger](#) and [poverty](#) are surging, and it is more important than ever to harness our resources, expertise, and energy toward present (and new) policies and programs that can effect the most change and provide the most help for the tens of millions of people who need it. FRAC's decades of experience and research have shown that bolstering, streamlining, and improving the federal nutrition programs — ensuring ease, equity, and dignity, and benefits adequacy — will allow more people to get the nutrition they need to thrive.

Protecting and Strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

[SNAP](#) is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Protecting and strengthening the program is key to ending hunger in the U.S. By providing monthly benefits to eligible people with low incomes to purchase food, SNAP plays a critical role in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, and improving family security, child and adult health, employment, and other outcomes.



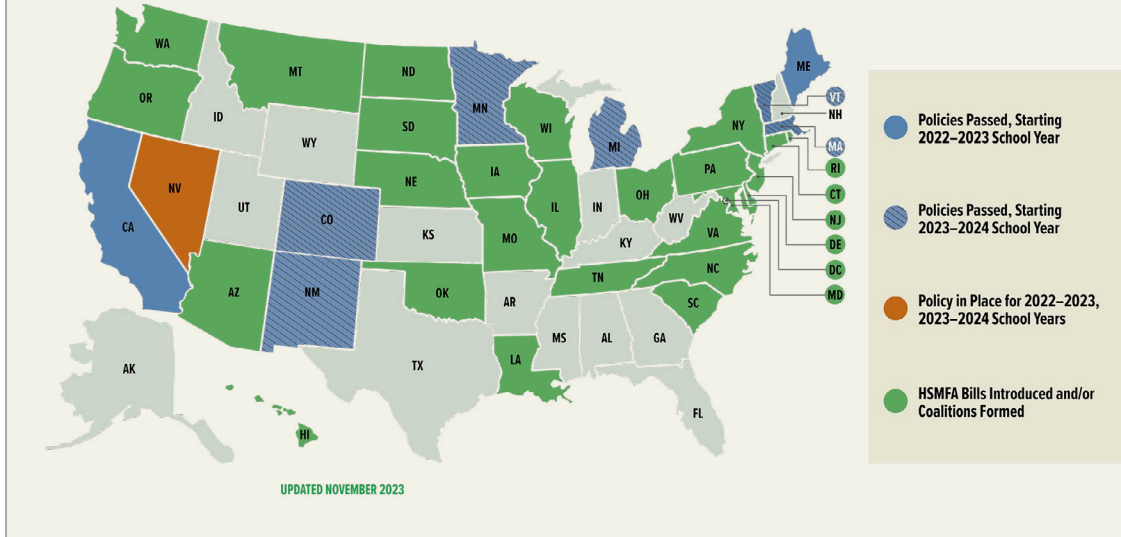
Despite its many strengths, SNAP benefits are not enough for most households to get through the entire month without hunger or being forced to sacrifice nutrition quality.

On March 1, 2023, all SNAP participants suffered cuts to their benefits, with the average SNAP benefit falling to a mere \$6 a person a day. This created a hunger cliff for millions of households. FRAC continues to advocate for benefits adequacy and equitable access to the program.

As the year came to a close and a government shutdown loomed, placing already struggling families and households around the country in jeopardy of losing benefits, FRAC mobilized its network to ratchet up its appeals to Congress, sending a powerful and direct message to the government about the importance of SNAP and the plight of the millions who would be affected by funding gaps or benefit disruptions. FRAC also increased its outreach, communicating crucial program changes, such as [updates to the SNAP time limit exemptions rule](#) for special populations such as [veterans](#), the [unhoused](#), and [young people with experience in foster care](#), and on improving access for [college students](#), to empower participants and inform advocates to help expand the reach of the program to those in need.

In the upcoming year, FRAC, with the support of our network, will work to leverage an integral piece of legislation, the [Farm Bill](#), to lessen the negative impacts of post-pandemic

Healthy School Meals for All



high-poverty schools across the country to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students, while eliminating the traditional school meal application process. This year's U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule, [Community Eligibility Provision: Increasing Options for Schools](#), which became effective at the end of October, lowers CEP's

and other changes to SNAP, such as the age groups affected by the benefit time limit, that have left too many people without the food they need, and continue to lead and support other national legislative action, and state and administrative advocacy, for this vital program.

Fueling Children's Health and Learning

[School meals](#) fuel children's learning and health. The ability of schools to offer free school meals to all their students during the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed the need, effectiveness, and potential of [Healthy School Meals for All \(HSMFA\)](#). FRAC has continued to build on the [lessons learned during the pandemic](#). Parents, teachers, students, school nutrition staff, and policymakers around the country have joined FRAC in raising their hand in support of free school meals for all students, regardless of household income. As a result, states are increasingly making Healthy School Meals for All permanent. FRAC will continue to lead on this issue to ensure that children have the food they need to learn and thrive, and keep the momentum going state by state and in Congress for permanent legislation, such as the [Universal School Meal Program Act of 2023](#), until Healthy School Meals for All is a reality nationwide.

Championing the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#) is one way that the country is getting closer to free healthy school meals for all. CEP has allowed tens of thousands of

eligibility threshold, providing 3,000 additional school districts the opportunity to offer all students school meals at no cost.

The FRAC annual report, [Afterschool Suppers: A Snapshot of Participation — October 2021 and October 2022](#), released in October, looked at participation in afterschool suppers and snacks on the state and national levels, and found that a significant number of children missed out on nutritious suppers and snacks offered by the Afterschool Nutrition Programs. In addition to Congressional action, FRAC is focused on outreach, technical assistance, and building a renewed commitment to program expansion to help secure equitable access for all children to the nutrition and learning opportunities they need during the hours after school.

The [permanent Summer EBT Program](#), beginning next year, will be a game changer for families and children across the country. By providing families with benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to purchase food at retail locations during the summer, the permanent Summer EBT Program will help feed the millions of children from households with low incomes nationwide who rely on school meals during the school year but lose access to them during the summer. FRAC continues to get the word out to encourage states to implement this exciting new program in the summer of 2024 and so that states and families understand the pathways to [Summer EBT](#) eligibility and participation.

Overcoming barriers that have limited participation in [Summer Nutrition Programs](#) is another path FRAC has identified to making sure that children are not only

fed during the school year but also after it ends. These nutrition programs at summer meals sites, sponsored by local governments, school districts, or private nonprofits, at locations including schools, parks, recreation centers, Indian reservations, camps, and other places where children congregate, provide meals in addition to enrichment programming for children during the summer months. FRAC's goal for these two programs (the Summer Nutrition Program, which serves up to two meals a day, and the Summer EBT Program, which would help expand access to food for struggling families in urban, suburban, and rural communities), fully implemented and working together, will decrease hunger for millions of children and alleviate economic hardship for their families — and in turn, increase local economic activity.

Supporting Nutrition in Early Childhood

In September, FRAC and over 600 national, state, and local organizations [signed a letter](#) in a unified plea to Congress to immediately pass a continuing resolution that would avert a government shutdown and protect funding for federal nutrition programs, especially the [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#), to guarantee the program could continue providing all who are eligible with the nutrition they need without interruption. More than 6.7 million women, young children, and infants rely on WIC to access healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and support, and health care and social service referrals. FRAC urged Congress to include additional funding in any short- and long-term

fiscal year 2024 spending bills so that eligible families have uninterrupted access to [WIC's significant nutrition and health benefits](#).

Addressing the Root Causes of Hunger

Addressing the complex and interdependent [root causes of hunger](#) is integral to FRAC's vision to build a nation free from hunger. For example, this year, FRAC compiled [research](#), including new state-level data, on the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit's (CTC) impact on households with children, including on hunger, food spending, and poverty, and provided recommendations for advocacy in support of a permanent expanded and inclusive CTC. The 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit showed a clear path to dramatically cutting hunger and poverty among households with children. These essential benefits for children and their families were lost when the CTC expired in December 2021. FRAC continues to urge Congress to reinstate the expanded Child Tax Credit, which helped millions of families put food on the table and drastically reduced hunger and poverty.

Bolstering Capacity to Fight Hunger at the Local Level

In early 2023, subgrantees of the [WIC CIAO Project](#), funded by a \$44 million grant to FRAC from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, began their work to help increase WIC participation. The project, through a partnership between FRAC, UnidosUS, the Native American Agriculture Fund, and the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, supports subgrantees that include WIC state agencies that could be either a geographic state agency, a territory, or an Indian Tribal Organization that administers the program; local agencies; and nonprofit entities and organizations to develop and implement innovative outreach strategies to increase WIC participation and retention, with a focus on underserved populations.

In February, FRAC was awarded a \$2 million grant from the USDA for a project focused on equity in child nutrition programs, to conduct and support research on expanding equitable access



to the federally funded child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The [Equitable Access in Child Nutrition Programs Project](#) research will identify barriers and solutions to increase equitable access to these critical nutrition programs, advancing participation and other expansion efforts.

In October, FRAC launched the [New Jersey Food Security Initiative](#), funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the Robert

Wood Johnson Foundation. The initiative is dedicated to addressing food insecurity and health inequities in New Jersey by uplifting existing initiatives and collaborations across the state — providing additional funding opportunities, capacity-building, resources, and technical assistance.

Support Our Work

Your donation supports our efforts to improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against

poverty-related hunger in the United States. We do this through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. With your help we can continue to provide advocacy coordination, training, technical assistance, and support to our network of state anti-hunger advocates.

Join us in being part of the solution. Together, we can build a nation free from hunger.

