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Maine Community Action Partnership Opposes LD 287 An Act To Require Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards To Be Printed with the Beneficiary's Photograph

March 23, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we oppose LD 287 An Act To Require Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards To Be Printed with the Beneficiary's Photograph.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and more.

MeCAP opposes policies that propose to shame the people who are supporting themselves and their families by using programs for which they qualify. We opposed the bill that became the current law allowing pictures and we oppose it now. This type of bill has been offered and rejected, appropriately, for many years. People with low-income face a variety of obstacles on the road to independence and self-sufficiency. Many need further education or training to find and keep a decent paying job. Many struggle with covering the costs of child care during the time they are at work or furthering their education, and to afford healthy meals for their families; the last thing they need is to call attention to themselves by using what should be a common, run of the mill debit card.

In Maine, who uses a SNAP EBT card? In 2019, 157,000, or 12% of the state population: nearly 55% are families with children and /or families with people who are older or have disabilities. People who use the program do so because they need it: 16% have income below 50% of poverty; 54% are between 51 – 100% of poverty. My written testimony includes more information on the real beneficiaries of one of the most important programs for people with low income in the country.

Put yourself in their shoes: is your picture on the debit card you use at Hannaford or Shaw's? No, mine neither, so what is the point of this? There is only one reason to require a picture on an EBT card – to call out that shopper as someone who is low income. To shame that person into worrying about what she or he is buying and what the cashier, bagger and person behind them will think.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)
Executive Director

Maine

Food Supplement Program

January 15th, 2021



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most important anti-hunger program.

Whom Does SNAP Reach?

In fiscal year 2019,^a it reached:

- **157,000** Maine residents, or **12%** of the state population (**1 in 9**)
- **38,000,000** participants in the United States, or **12%** of the total population (**1 in 9**)

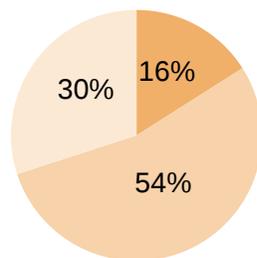
MAINE	almost 55% of SNAP participants are in families with children	almost 55% are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities	more than 36% are in working families
NATIONALLY	more than 66% of SNAP participants are in families with children	almost 36% are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities	almost 42% are in working families

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019

Most SNAP Participants in Maine Are Poor

Share of participants by household income, FY 2019

- Income at or below 50% of poverty
- Income between 51-100% of poverty
- Income above 100% of poverty



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019

Many Maine households struggle to put food on the table. The most recent data show:

- **12%** of households were “food insecure,” or struggled to afford a nutritionally adequate diet.
- Median income was **3.9% above** the 2007 level, after adjusting for inflation.
- **10.9%** of the population lived below the poverty line.
- **13.8%** of children lived below the poverty line.
- **8.5%** of elderly lived below the poverty line.

SNAP reaches needy populations: Between 95 and 100% of eligible individuals participated in SNAP in **Maine** in 2017, and **94%** of eligible workers participated.

SNAP kept **43,000** people out of poverty in **Maine**, including **16,000** children, per year between 2013 and 2017, on average. (These figures adjust for households' underreporting of benefits.)

What Benefits Do SNAP Recipients Receive?

SNAP targets benefits according to need. Very poor households receive more SNAP benefits than households closer to the poverty line since they need more help affording an adequate diet. SNAP recipients in [Maine](#) received \$203.63 million in benefits in 2019.^a



Fiscal Year 2019

Average monthly SNAP benefit for each household member:

\$117

Average SNAP benefit per person per meal:

\$1.19

Average Monthly SNAP Benefit By Demographic Group, FY 2019, Maine

All Households

\$183

Households with children

\$338

Working households

\$240

Households with seniors

\$112

Households with non-elderly disabled individuals

\$158

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019

How Does SNAP Benefit the Economy?

Moody's Analytics estimates that in a weak economy, \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity. Households receive SNAP benefits on electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, which can be used only to purchase food at one of about 247,600 authorized retail locations around the country, including some 1,400 in [Maine](#).



For more information on SNAP, including Maine-specific information, please see:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Chart Book: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table>

USDA SNAP data: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

Maine SNAP program: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ofi/services/snap/index.html>

^a Published SNAP participation data from USDA are adjusted for January and February 2019 to account for early issuance of February 2019 benefits in January 2019. Published benefit data from USDA have not been adjusted.