HUNGER in TENNESSEE
Vanderbilt Tennessee Child Health Poll

Food insecurity among children in Tennessee has spiked according to a recent poll by Vanderbilt’s Center for Child Health Policy. The poll shows that in just one year there was an increase of more than 30% in families facing food insecurity. The study found that 41.2% of Tennessee families face “low or very low food security”. This number was 31.3% in 2022. Notably, the study finds that these numbers disproportionally affect Black parents and families (50.6%) vs. White families (41.4%), a trend that is carried over from previous years.

TJC’s Director of Nutrition Advocacy, Signe Anderson, shared with Axios that: "We really need to look hard beyond food to address other basic needs, like housing, transportation and childcare." And "I think there's a lot more that we can do to support families coming out of the pandemic."

To view the full study details put out by Vanderbilt, click HERE, and to see the Axios article click HERE.
Thanks, West TN!

The West TN Anti-Hunger Conference was a success! Thank you, Church Health Center, for sharing resources and information, and Mid-South Food Bank for hosting us in their amazing space. TJC would also like to give a big shout-out to Central BBQ (a Memphis staple) for donating an amazing barbecue lunch for our attendees. Finally, thank you to all of the anti-hunger advocates who took time out of their schedule to show up and work together to end hunger in Tennessee.

Aisling Mäki with The Daily Memphian was in attendance and wrote a great article you can view HERE.
Tennesseans who experience food and economic insecurity are facing yet another assault on their ability to thrive and survive. Bill Lee is demanding that some Tennesseans who received SNAP benefits to help pay for
food during the pandemic pay that money back!
If it sounds crazy to demand that families pay back thousands of dollars for food aid that they received during the pandemic, that's because it is. The federal government knows it is. That's why the feds are allowing states to take the option to waive pandemic overpayments. But Tennessee is not taking this option. Instead, Lee and his administration are attempting to pull these benefits back.

So to be clear, Lee is demanding that his citizens – folks who are struggling to keep their families afloat right now – to pay money to the government that they don't have. Instead of adding additional financial burden to these families, Tennessee should take the option that the federal government is offering.

Please sign the petition by April 14 and tell Bill Lee to provide relief to community members, not burden them further. It's just common sense.

SIGN HERE.

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Skimming - Stolen SNAP Benefits and What to Do About It
What to do if you or someone you know has had their benefits stolen:

- Call EBT customer service 1-888-997-9444 to report stolen benefits
- Call the TDHS Office of Inspector General fraud hotline 1-800-241-2629
- Visit the TDHS website for more information
SNAP and Families First households can take these steps to reduce the risk of skimming:

- **Keep your PIN secret.**
- **Check your EBT account regularly for unauthorized charges.**
- **Check for anything suspicious attached to card reading machines.**
Maternal mortality rates in the U.S. have increased significantly according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2021 1,205 women in the U.S. died of maternal causes. This is a 40% increase from 862 deaths in 2020. The numbers are even more staggering for Black women, who have a death rate of 69.9 per 100,000, which is 2.6 times higher than the rate for white women. Among Hispanic women, the death rate is
28. According to the CDC, 84% of pregnancy-related deaths were preventable. [Tennessee has the lowest WIC participation](#) rate in the country among eligible Black mothers.

WIC can help! WIC improves maternal health outcomes. If you or someone you know is pregnant or have recently given birth, you/they may be eligible for WIC. Children under the age of 5, may also qualify for this program. Here are some tools to help you navigate the process:

Locate your county WIC clinic [HERE](#)
To find out if you qualify [HERE](#) and use this [WIC Pre-screening tool](#).

For more questions about WIC, email us at [nutrition@tnjustice.org](mailto:nutrition@tnjustice.org).

**USDA Proposes Rule to Make More Schools Eligible for Free Meals**

USDA has proposed a [new rule](#) that would lower the participation threshold for schools to opt into Community Eligibility Provisions (CEP) from 40% of eligible students to 25%. This would significantly expand the number of schools in Tennessee that can offer free school meals to students. The President's budget for 2024 would provide additional funding to ease the financial burden on states by $15 Billion over 10 years.
While Tennessee ended SNAP Emergency Allotments over a year ago in January 2022, which provided extra benefits during the pandemic, the Federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) is ending on May 11. This will affect working adults ages 18-49 and college students. Working adults, known as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), will again face a 3-month time limit to SNAP benefits unless they are working or meet an exemption. College students face greater restriction to SNAP. Under the PHE, any student eligible for work study programs was exempt from such requirements whether they actually worked or not. For the full list of effects, click HERE.
The Farm Bill is due to be reauthorized and SNAP is a major focus. There are federal bills being proposed that would have a positive impact to improve access to SNAP for college students, lift the drug felony ban, increase funding for seniors and people with disabilities, and eliminate time limits for underemployed people. Join TJC to speak out against efforts to cut SNAP spending and take food benefits away from individuals struggling to find work!

Check out resources from our national partners at FRAC and MAZON who have lifted up Farm Bill priorities that would help Tennesseans struggling with food insecurity. Also, the House Committee on Agriculture wants to hear from you about the Farm Bill! Submit your thoughts HERE.

**Federal Legislation**

With the 2023 Farm Bill on the horizon, our focus is on legislation proposed at the federal level that will affect Tennessean’s access to nutrition programs.

Support these bills to ensure better access to SNAP:
• The Improving Access to Nutrition Act would remove SNAP time limits for participation in the program. Access to food should be considered a human right and never a punishment to those who struggle to find and keep work.

• The Enhanced Access to SNAP Act (EATS Act) would remove unequal SNAP time limit restrictions for college students, allowing the enrollment in classes to fulfill those requirements. This bill recognizes the value of education and college learning as work.

• The MEAL Act would end the almost 30-year drug felony ban on the SNAP program. The bill would allow people to begin the application process while still in prison, ensuring they have benefits from Day One. This would reduce recidivism and help citizens return to society.

Oppose this harmful bill to SNAP:

• The America Works Best Act would 1) increase the age for time limits to SNAP from 18-49 to 18-65, and 2) limit SNAP for parents of children over the age of 7, instead of the previous rules that a parent of any minor is exempt from such requirements. This bill is co-sponsored by Tennessee Rep. Andy Ogles (district 5) in Nashville. Please contact Ogles HERE to tell him you do not support this legislation.

Take action on these bills!

• Contact the Tennessee legislators who serve on the House Agriculture Committee overseeing the Farm Bill. They are Scott Desjarlais (TN-04) and Rep. John Rose (TN-06). Let them know that you support the first three bills above and that you oppose the fourth bill.

• Secondly, contact Andy Ogles’s and let him know you oppose his co-sponsorship to this legislation.

• Third, contact your district’s Senator and Representatives and let them know that you support the first three bills. Because these bills are federal, they will be voted on by both the U.S. House and Senate and your elected officials should know your position.

State Legislation

The bills we previously reported on in the TN state legislature have been tabled for this legislative session, but they may be picked up again next year. We will update you as appropriate if there is further action on these bills.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Tennessee Immigrant Access to Nutrition Safety Net Webinar

Register HERE.

Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 1:00pm CT -- The nutrition safety net programs can provide support to Tennessee families, but programs like SNAP are limited to certain immigrants, refugees and asylees. Learn about the programs that are currently available to families and how to navigate barriers that many non-English speakers face. We will talk about ways to improve access and highlight important information for immigrant communities when it comes to accessing programs like SNAP, WIC and school meals. E-mail nutrition@tnjustice.org for more information.
SNAP Access Call

Register [HERE](mailto:nutrition@tnjustice.org)

Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 10:00am CT – Join us to discuss SNAP advocacy, casework best practices, and nutrition program updates. E-mail nutrition@tnjustice.org for more information.

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