



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

Contact: Meaghan Abbott, meabbott@pa.gov

**First Lady Shapiro Volunteers at Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to
Raise Awareness of Impending Federal Reductions to SNAP Benefits**

Encourages Pennsylvanians to support community food charities to meet critical need following federal action.



Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania First Lady Lori Shapiro today visited the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to bring awareness to upcoming federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and encourage continued support for Pennsylvania’s charitable food network from food banks to soup kitchens.

“Having access to healthy food is essential to living a healthy, productive life and we must ensure that remains available across our Commonwealth. The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and their dedicated volunteers help Pennsylvania’s neighbors in need each and every day, and I’m inspired by their service to their community,” First Lady Shapiro said. “We know additional SNAP payments have been a lifeline for our communities during the last nearly three years of the pandemic, and the upcoming federal changes will create uncertainty for many individuals and families. In partnership with Pennsylvania’s charitable food network, our Administration is working to make certain that our friends and neighbors are aware of these changes and will have ways to access the food they need and deserve.”

The First Lady's visit comes just one week before the first of two major changes that will impact Pennsylvania's 1.9 million SNAP recipients. Due to passage of the recent federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, starting in March, SNAP recipient households will no longer receive the Emergency Allotment (EA) additional payment created during the COVID-19 public health emergency and will resume receiving just one SNAP payment per month. February will be the last month EAs are sent; starting March 1, SNAP recipients will only receive one regular SNAP payment. During the pandemic, the EAs allowed a household to receive the maximum SNAP benefit amount for their household size or, if they already received the maximum benefit amount, an additional \$95.

When these benefits end, Pennsylvania's charitable food network will be called to step up its fight against hunger in communities across the Commonwealth. Food banks in Pennsylvania typically serve approximately 2.2 million people annually, but since the public health crisis began in March 2020, these food banks have served nearly 356.6 million pounds of food to more than 41.8 million duplicated individuals.

"Organizations like the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank are preparing to meet the increased needs that will come with the reduction in SNAP benefits," said First Lady Shapiro. "I encourage everyone to support your local food bank and food pantry with food or resources. Every bit goes to support life-saving work."

Additionally, the 2023 cost of living adjustment for Social Security Income (SSI), which is set by the federal government, prompted an 8.7 percent increase to SSI income. SNAP eligibility thresholds – also set at the federal level – did not rise proportionally. Because of this, approximately 249,000 households will experience a decrease in their base SNAP benefits by an average of \$40 per household, which will also take effect in March when EAs end. Approximately 5,000 to 20,000 households will be disenrolled from SNAP altogether due to the SSI increase. These federal reductions will primarily affect older Pennsylvanians and seniors.

To prepare for the sudden impact these changes will have, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) has already mailed each SNAP recipient a letter detailing what is changing, when and where they can turn for help, while a letter from DHS Acting Secretary Val Arkoosh went out in late January to state lawmakers informing them of extra resources their constituents can utilize as the EAs come to an end.

Pennsylvanians who need to report changes to their household size, income, or expenses are encouraged to report any changes either online at dhs.pa.gov/COMPASS, via the myCOMPASS PA mobile app, or by calling DHS' Customer Service Center at 877-395-8930 (or 215-560-7226 for Philadelphia residents). This will help ensure households are receiving the maximum SNAP benefit based off their individual circumstances.

The Department of Human Services recognizes the impact these federal changes may have on households and wants to make sure families that need food assistance know where to go for help:

- SNAP recipients who are pregnant or have kids under 5 may be able to get help buying food from PA WIC. You can call 1-800-WIC-WINS or apply online at www.pawic.com;
- You can call 211 or visit www.pa211.org to connect with various local food resources;

- Visit www.feedingpa.org to find local food banks and other food assistance programs;
- Go to www.dhs.pa.gov/endinghunger and www.agriculture.pa.gov/foodinsecurity for information on assistance programs and other resources; and,
- If you are a SNAP eligible senior citizen, apply to receive additional vouchers redeemable at more than 800 farm stands and more than 200 farmers' markets in Pennsylvania. The Senior Food Box Program can also provide you with additional shelf-stable groceries. Learn more about these programs from the [Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#).

For more information about SNAP Emergency Allotments, visit dhs.pa.gov/SNAPcares.