**October 8, 2019**

**Thank You for SNAP BBCE Rulemaking Comments**

Thank you to everyone who pushed back against the Administration’s proposal to eliminate SNAP benefits for 3.1 million people and jeopardize free school meals for more than 500,000 children. Just under 80,000 comments have already been counted, with still more being sorted. The vast majority were in opposition, providing compelling stories of how this proposal would needlessly harm millions. The comments will now be considered and the Administration will then decide whether to move forward with it, amend it, pull it or do nothing – stay tuned for updates!

**SNAP Utility Deductions Proposal Would Cut Benefits for Nearly One-Fifth**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a [proposed rule](https://default.salsalabs.org/Te8a428d9-5f47-467f-8f30-014a8a7e22fe/fe2449ef-d4ab-436c-b74f-49489d0545e5) to purportedly standardize how states calculate certain utility deductions for recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. The department said that such a change was needed to update “a patchwork of outdated approaches states currently use” when they calculate how household utilities factor into what’s known as the SNAP standard utility allowances (SUA) However, it is interesting to note that the move would cut payments by about $4.5 billion over five years. When the rule is presented, we will share more. Under current law, SNAP takes into account the utility expenses of each SNAP household. States adjust household benefits based on a state-specific Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) calculated by the state and approved by USDA. The current policy allows variances in SUAs to accommodate for differences in utility costs and rates, and allows states flexibility in how they calculate those costs. By changing how states take households’ utility costs into account, the proposed rule would cut SNAP benefit amounts for many hungry households. The December 2.

**Ohio SNAP Waivers**

The Columbus Dispatch published a [compelling op-ed](https://www.dispatch.com/opinion/20190930/column-no-steady-work-is-still-too-hard-for-low-wage-earners-to-find?rssfeed=true) from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks explaining the perils of House Bill 200 (Wiggam-R), which would eliminate Ohio’s ability to seek waiver to SNAP eligibility. Interestingly, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services recently announced [expansion of Ohio’s waived counties](http://d31hzlhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20191002/a3/c8/6d/13/20d779f4750b9cbcd7e6eeb2/2020_-_ABAWD_Waiver_announcement.pdf); Henry, Lake, Stark and Summit Counties were added, bringing counties with waivers on eligibility criteria to 42.

**Medicaid Access Rule Proposal**

The Trump Administration recently [proposed a rule](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/07/15/2019-14943/medicaid-program-methods-for-assuring-access-to-covered-medicaid-services-rescission) [to rescind an important Obama Administration Medicaid regulation](https://www.chn.org/articles/chn-advocates-oppose-repeal-of-medicaid-access-monitoring-rule/). The Medicaid Access Monitoring Rule ensures providers are paid sufficiently under Medicaid to ensure that enough participate in the program to give beneficiaries access to covered services. The Georgetown University Center for Children and Families [noted](https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CCF_Access-Rule-NPRM-Comments_FINAL-.pdf) that repealing the Access Rule would harm more than 2.5 million Medicaid children whose providers are paid on fee-for-service.

**House Committee Passes Older Americans Reauthorization Bill**
On September 18th, the House Education and Labor Committee unanimously passed [H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019](http://link.quorumoutbox.com/f/a/RyCnHE_czSYVS7bQ7AX3eg~~/AACYXwA~/RgRfb5B2P0Q3aHR0cHM6Ly9lZGxhYm9yLmhvdXNlLmdvdi9pbW8vbWVkaWEvZG9jL0guUi4lMjA0MzM0LnBkZlcDc3BjQgoAJ4ALjV0IEGhBUhp0d2hpdGVAbWlkb2hpb2Zvb2RiYW5rLm9yZ1gEAAAAAA~~), out of Committee. This legislation would reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) for five years and includes language adding malnutrition to the screening provisions; adds reducing malnutrition to the purposes of nutrition programs; and, includes language to focus future efforts on social determinants of health in the senior population. The full House must still consider the bill and the Senate is continuing work on their version of the reauthorization. As always, we will keep you posted on developments!

**CNR Update**
As Congress continues to work on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) Act, it is imperative that we continue to share our message that all children deserve access to the meals they need to grow and thrive and that no children should be denied school meals because their parents are behind on meal payments or summer or afterschool meals due to administrative red tape. With more than 11 million children living in food insecure households, Congress has an opportunity to close the summer, afterschool and school meal gaps with this reauthorization. For information and resources on CNR, visit <https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/child-nutrition-programs> and <https://frac.org/action/child-nutrition-reauthorization-cnr>.

**Federal Government Budget**

With only a few days to spare, the Senate on September 26 passed a stopgap spending Continuing Resolution (CR) to avoid a government shutdown. President Trump signed the bill September 27. The House had passed the CR September 19. The measure (H.R. 4378) will keep the government funded from October 1, the start of the new fiscal year, through November 21. Most government agencies and programs will see flat FY19 funding levels during this time; a few so-called “anomalies,” or adjustments to funding levels, were included for select programs. One such anomaly was included for the 2020 Census, which needs additional funding at the beginning of the fiscal year to stay on target for the mandated decennial count. The CR also includes a package of health care-related extensions of programs funding community health centers and continued authority for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. In addition to the CR to keep the government temporarily funded, Senate appropriators have spent much of the past few weeks working on their chamber’s versions of FY20 spending bills to fund the government for the rest of the fiscal year. These include the agricultural spending bill with appropriations for WIC and the CSFP programs. Additional bills cover health care and low income housing programs. The House has passed the majority of needed spending bills; once both chambers have passed all of the respective spending bills they will need to be reconciled and agreed to and signed by the President, so there is still work to be done.

**FeedingAmerica launches “I am Hunger in America” Campaign**

FeedingAmerica launched their new national PSA campaign, “I am Hunger in America.” Using photos, USDA data and artificial intelligence to juxtapose technology with humanity and highlight the issue of hunger in America, the campaign aims to get consumers to question their perceptions of what hunger looks like in our country. Read the [multimedia press release here](https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=82177503&msgid=1132794&act=BSQO&c=366788&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.multivu.com%2Fplayers%2FEnglish%2F8352552-feeding-america-i-am-hunger-in-america-psa%2F) that details the campaign.

**Happy National Farm to School Month**

October is National Farm to School Month, a time to lift up the connections between students and local food. This is a great time to highlight ties between the agricultural community and anti-hunger advocates as we seek to provide nutritious food for children. Whatever your role or interest, find information at <http://www.farmtoschool.org/> on  how to celebrate these connections!

**Census Data Shows Growing Uninsured and Inequality**

For the first time since implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the number of uninsured Americans is on the rise, according to annual U.S. Census Bureau statistics recently released. The statistics showed that 27.5 million Americans, or 8.5 percent of the population, did not have health insurance in 2018, an increase of 1.9 million people over 2017. Meanwhile, Medicaid coverage dropped by nearly 2 million people from 2017 to 2018. Those losing Medicaid did not shift to private insurance; there were 429,000 fewer private insurance enrollees in 2018 than in 2017. The Census Bureau actually released two broad sets of numbers in September. National statistics released in early September reported on poverty and income levels, as well as the number of people with health care coverage. On Thursday, Sept. 26, the Census Bureau released state and local data derived from the American Community Survey (ACS). The newest data released last week show a poverty rate of 13.1 percent in 2018, down from 13.4 percent over the previous year. But, income inequality rose nationwide. More than 30 percent of all people in the U.S. have incomes less than twice the federal poverty line; in 24 states and Puerto Rico, at least 30 percent of people had incomes this modest – above poverty, but on the edge. While poverty is declining for communities of color, African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians and Alaska Natives remain disproportionately poor. For more in-depth review of the data, read the Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) statement in response to the newest numbers [here](https://www.chn.org/voices/dangerous-gaps-as-inequality-rises-30-percent-of-americans-live-close-to-the-edge-and-huge-proportions-of-minorities-and-young-children-are-poor/); and, see CHN’s table showing total poverty, under 200 percent of poverty and child poverty with certain race/ethnicity details, for 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico [here](https://u1584542.ct.sendgrid.net/mps2/c/0wA/ni0YAA/t.2vd/WBh3tXDDRgmxY5xUj-WwrQ/h1/-2B0tgW2N5xxiovZ5MeXt7fq7qKnEmD0Gf4P4zGP-2Bx7bMf-2B5L9FFw5tjk5HxlEOp1DkYlJzpdaN7qWWlqeA-2FG0n8vCfgsq9kXwuvZWttvhGVFqOFSqe5tEEvasJnmM1xl1/-aNX). CHN also summarized a number of CHN members’ responses to the national data [here](https://www.chn.org/voices/resources-from-around-the-coalition-chn-members-weigh-in-on-census-numbers/). And CHN’s poverty resource page is [here](https://www.chn.org/proj/yearly-census-poverty-data/). Finally, [click here](https://www.chn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/First-Look-9-10-19.pdf) to view CHN’s “First Look at Poverty and Health Insurance: Fewer Americans Have Health Insurance – And Millions Are Not Sharing in Economic Growth.”

**Census**

Census Day 2020 is now just under six months away! Learn more on how the Census impacts those we serve, our communities and all of Ohio at <https://www.ohiocensus.org/>.

**Advocacy Contacts**

For questions or information, contact your advocacy team: Tim White, Advocacy Manager: (614) 317-9480 or twhite@midohiofoodbank.org; or, Marilyn Tomasi, Vice President, Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs (614) 317-9446 or mtomasi@midohiofoodbank.org. Access [advocacy resources and FAN e-blasts](https://www.midohiofoodbank.org/get_involved/advocacy/ways-to-help/) here; or, for federal advocacy information, visit the [Feeding America](http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=SPnfUrAhWwFez6hLDsvQxt6KDijlIXA%2B) and the [Food Research and Action Center](http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=yKcA9%2BRcLHlF7QVGsnEeYd6KDijlIXA%2B) (FRAC) advocacy sites.