

Adams Introduces Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021



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Adams, Gillibrand, Hayes, Lee, and Velázquez Announce Introduction of the Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021 *Transformative Legislation Expands and Strengthens SNAP Benefits*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, **Congresswoman Alma Adams (NC-12)** and **U.S. Senator Gillibrand (D-NY)** announced the introduction of the ***Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021***, transformative legislation that expands and strengthens Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for vulnerable community members who struggle to make ends meet. With food banks experiencing skyrocketing demand across the country, the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically increased the need for SNAP to combat food insecurity.

This effort builds **Adams and Gillibrand’s** previous work. **Adams originally introduced** the Closing the Meal Gap Act in 2017, and again in 2019. **Gillibrand** originally introduced the *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2020* with **then-Senator Kamala Harris**. House co-leads include **Representatives Jahana Hayes (CT-05), Nydia M. Velázquez (NY-07), and Barbara Lee (CA-13)**. The 2021 legislation includes 86 House cosponsors as of press time.

“Over 40 million Americans depend on SNAP for their meals, even though SNAP benefits are not generous enough to feed a family or prevent child hunger,” **said Congresswoman Adams, Vice Chair of the House Committee on**

Agriculture. “The *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021* will address this issue by strengthening the SNAP program for millions of people affected by COVID-19 as well as older Americans, people with disabilities, children, struggling parents, students, unemployed and underemployed people, and veterans. I’m grateful for the leadership of Senator Gillibrand and hopeful we will pass this bill and take a historic step towards ending hunger in the United States.”

“The United States was already facing a severe food crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. We live in the richest nation in the world and yet, 42 million Americans are struggling with food insecurity. This is unacceptable,” **said Senator Gillibrand.** “SNAP provides a critical lifeline for so many families and it needs support more than ever to meet the needs of SNAP recipients. I am proud to work with Congresswoman Adams on the Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021 to enhance SNAP benefits, break down the barriers to eligibility, and keep food on the table for all Americans.”

“Forty-two million food insecure Americans are too many. We can end this dreadful reality by 2030 by doing things like raising the SNAP benefits by 30 percent so that families will actually be able to cover food expenses throughout the month. By eliminating certain eligibility limits and barriers, and expanding access to SNAP to U.S. territories, we can get closer to ending hunger. I am glad to work with Representatives Alma Adams, Nydia Velázquez, Barbara Lee, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to raise awareness and end food insecurity in America,” **said Congresswoman Hayes.**

“Millions have struggled to keep food on the table throughout this pandemic. We have a moral responsibility to invest in SNAP and other programs that address food insecurity,” **said Congresswoman Lee.** “As a single mother raising two boys, I know the tough decisions that families face when paying for food and other necessities. SNAP was a bridge over troubled water to help feed my family, and the same is true for countless others. I’m proud to join Rep. Adams and my colleagues on this effort.”

“In the wealthiest nation on earth, it is inexcusable that families continue to go hungry because the federal government has failed to meet the moment,” **said Congresswoman Velázquez.** “SNAP is a bedrock program that feeds so many families in my district and throughout the country. However, as it currently stands, the SNAP program is coming up short with tens of millions of Americans still food insecure. That is why I am so proud to join my colleagues in introducing this legislation to once-and-for-all close the meal gap by eliminating barriers to the program, expanding the baseline for SNAP benefits, and finally extending SNAP to Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. As

America continues to recover from the pandemic, making sure families can put food on the table must be a top priority as we work to Build Back Better.”

Original sponsors of the *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021* in the House include **Representatives Aguilar, Auchincloss, Barragán, Bass, Blumenauer, Boyle, Brown, Brownley, Carbajal, Cárdenas, Carson, Chu, Cicilline, Clark, Cleaver, Cohen, Connolly, DeLauro, DelBene, DeSaulnier, Deutch, Eshoo, Espaillat, Evans, Frankel, Gallego, Garamendi, García (IL), Garcia (TX), Gomez, Grijalva, Huffman, Jayapal, Kaptur, Keating, Khanna, Kilmer, Langevin, Lawson, Lieu, Lowenthal, Maloney, McGovern, Meeks, Meng, Moore, Morelle, Moulton, Nadler, Napolitano, Neal, Newman, O'Halleran, Omar, Panetta, Payne, Jr., Perlmutter, Peters, Pingree, Pocan, Pressley, Raskin, Rice (NY), Ross, Roybal-Allard, Ruppertsberger, Rush, Ryan, Sánchez, Scanlon, Schakowsky, Schiff, Sewell, Sires, Smith (WA), Strickland, Swalwell, Trahan, Vargas, Wasserman Schultz, Watson Coleman, and Welch.**

The *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021* is endorsed by the **Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), Feeding America, Operation New Hope, American Heart Association, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Association of Public Health Nutritionists, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Bread of the World, Broome Tioga BOCES, California Association of Food Banks, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Community Food Advocates, D.C. Hunger Solutions, Danone North America, End Hunger CT, End Hunger Durham, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, Feeding Westchester, FeedMore WNY, Florida Impact to End Hunger, Food Bank for Central NY, Food Bank For New York City, Food Bank of the Southern Tier, FoodCorps, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Hunger Free America, Hunger Free New Jersey, Hunger Solutions New York, Islamic Relief USA, Island Harvest, Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays, Inc., Long Island Cares, Inc.— The Harry Chapin Food Bank, Maryland Hunger Solutions, Maryland Hunger Solutions, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Mecklenburg County, National Education Association, National Women's Law Center, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (NJHSA), Northwest Harvest, Northwest Harvest, RESULTS, Save the Children, Share Our Strength, The Coalition for Food Security Puerto Rico, The Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina, The Food Trust, Urban Outreach Center, Utahns Against Hunger, Virginia**

Hunger Solutions, Virginia Poverty Law Center, and WhyHunger.

“The *Closing the Meal Gap Act* would take our country a long way towards ending hunger. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger, but its impact has been undermined by its insufficient benefit amounts,” **said Luis Guardia, President of the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)**. “FRAC is proud to support the Closing the Meals Gap Act to make long overdue corrections to flawed SNAP benefit calculations and get households access to more adequate nutrition they need for health and productivity. The Act’s positive impact also will be felt throughout all parts of the food chain—from farmers and food manufacturers, to truckers, grocers, and store clerks. We urge Congress to enact the Closing the Meals Gap Act and boost SNAP benefits to promote food security and hasten economic recovery.”

“With over 20 years of experience providing reentry services in Northeast Florida, we at Operation New Hope know how the population we serve struggles with food insecurity,” **said Kevin T. Gay, Founder and CEO of Operation New Hope**. “And since poverty and financial hardship for the formerly incarcerated are main drivers of recidivism, we are in support of any effort to help alleviate immediate financial hardship. We support The Closing the Meal Gap Act as a measure that would address our clients’ financial concerns related to the rising cost of food in America.”

The *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021* will:

- **Increase the baseline for SNAP benefits by approximately 30 percent** by using the Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for the calculating the SNAP formula, to better take into account how much working people spend on food.
- **Eliminate eligibility limits & unrealistic barriers by:**
 - **Permanently authorizing the standard medical deduction in every state** for seniors and disabled individuals applying for SNAP benefits at a minimum of \$140. Individuals with high expenses could continue to apply for a higher, itemized medical deduction.
 - **Eliminating the cap on the Excess Shelter Deduction** in the SNAP formula for all households to take into account the cost of living for SNAP recipients in areas with high rent and utilities.
 - **Eliminating Time-Limits on Benefits** for

Americans.

- **Expand benefits for territories**, ending discrimination against those who live and work in U.S. territories by creating a path to transition them to SNAP and treating them as if they were states.

[**A one-pager on the bill can be found here.**](#)

[**Bill text can be found here.**](#)

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