



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

### AGENDA ITEM

**DATE:** November 4, 2025

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

#### **SUBJECT**

**CALLING ON THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO KEEP SAN DIEGANS FROM EXPERIENCING A HUNGER CRISIS AND WAIVE BOARD POLICY A-72 (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

#### **OVERVIEW**

Across the country, more than 42 million Americans, one in eight people, rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to afford groceries each month. These are working parents, seniors, and children who depend on modest food benefits to make ends meet. Now, because of Washington's dysfunction, they are being told to go hungry.

The ongoing federal shutdown has halted new appropriations for SNAP, threatening to suspend benefits beginning November 1, 2025. Without immediate intervention by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), millions of families nationwide will lose access to the food assistance they rely on to survive. This crisis is entirely preventable. The USDA has confirmed it holds roughly \$6 billion in contingency reserves, funds explicitly designed to sustain SNAP when federal operations are disrupted. Yet the agency has refused to release them. This is not a question of logistics or budgetary caution, it is a question of priorities. Inaction will result in the Trump Administration taking food off the tables of working families.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities makes clear that the federal government has not only the tools but the legal responsibility to continue providing SNAP benefits during a shutdown. The Administration could use its transfer authority, the same mechanism it already used to deliver emergency funds to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, to supplement existing contingency reserves, which alone are insufficient to cover full benefits<sup>1</sup>. The USDA has both the means and the mandate to act. Each day of delay is a choice, and every hour of inaction pushes millions of families closer to hunger.

The impact in San Diego County will be immediate and devastating. Nearly 400,000 residents, including 125,000 children and 100,000 seniors, depend on CalFresh, California's version of SNAP. As of September, 237,768 households received a combined \$75 million in monthly

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benefits, money that flows directly through local grocery stores, farmers markets, and small businesses. If those benefits are paused, families will go hungry, food banks will be overwhelmed, and our most basic commitment to support the wellbeing of our communities will be broken.

The impact spans every supervisorial district:

District 1: 113,084 recipients  
District 2: 80,929 recipients  
District 3: 28,509 recipients  
District 4: 99,050 recipients  
District 5: 61,841 recipients

If contingency reserves are not released, this federal shutdown will become a local hunger crisis. A single mother at the checkout line will have to decide which items to put back. A senior will skip dinner so a grandchild can eat. Local food banks like Feeding San Diego and the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank will be forced into emergency response mode.

Governor Newsom has already stepped in, committing up to \$80 million in state funds, deploying the California National Guard and California Volunteers to support food banks statewide. His swift action demonstrates what leadership looks like in a crisis and underscores the need for federal agencies to meet that urgency.

San Diego's democratic Congressional Delegation has also been a strong and consistent partner throughout this crisis. Our federal representatives have worked diligently to elevate this issue in Washington, press for the release of contingency reserves, and advocate for swift administrative action to protect families from losing access to food benefits. Their continued engagement and leadership are essential to securing an immediate and lasting solution.

The County has already used its legislative authority to advocate for federal action through our Washington, D.C. team and the National Association of Counties. Today's action elevates that advocacy to a formal, public directive from the County, calling on the USDA Administrator to immediately release contingency reserves and use existing transfer authority to sustain food benefits for families. It also directs coordination with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and other counties to support a unified statewide coalition urging urgent federal action.

Every child, every parent, and every senior in San Diego County deserves the dignity of a full plate and the peace of mind that comes with knowing they can feed their family.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER AND CHAIR PRO-TEM PALOMA AGUIRRE**

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to enhance legislative support for continuation of SNAP benefits, including transmitting a letter to the USDA Administrator calling for the immediate release of SNAP contingency reserves and use of existing federal transfer authority to sustain food benefits for families during the federal shutdown. Coordinate with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and other California

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counties to support a statewide coalition urging urgent federal action to prevent interruptions in nutrition assistance.

2. Waive Board Policy A-72 Agenda and Related Process, Section 2.C.2.ii, which establishes required timelines for review when preparing a Board Letter.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Interruptions in SNAP benefits would disproportionately harm low-income households, seniors on fixed incomes, and families with children, the same residents already most affected by the region’s high cost of living and food insecurity. In San Diego County, nearly half of SNAP recipients are children, and one in four are older adults. Delays or reductions in benefits would deepen existing disparities in health, nutrition, and economic stability across communities.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Food security is essential to a sustainable community. Interruptions in SNAP benefits would create immediate strain on local food systems, forcing families to rely on emergency resources and increasing demand on nonprofits and County programs. By urging the federal government to release contingency reserves and sustain benefits, this action supports economic and social stability for San Diego County residents.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with these recommendations. Funds for the actions requested are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan based on existing staff time. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

SNAP benefits generate significant local economic activity, with approximately \$75 million in federal food assistance distributed monthly in San Diego County. These funds circulate directly through neighborhood grocery stores, farmers markets, and small businesses that depend on consistent consumer spending. Interruptions in SNAP benefits would reduce local demand, strain small retailers, and create ripple effects across the regional food economy. By urging the Trump Administration to release contingency reserves and sustain benefits, this action helps protect local business stability, preserve jobs in the food and retail sectors, and maintain the economic activity that supports San Diego County’s communities.

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh, provides essential food assistance to more than 42 million Americans, one in eight people nationwide. Due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, new appropriations have been halted, threatening to suspend benefits beginning November 1, 2025.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has confirmed it holds roughly \$6 billion in contingency reserves, established to sustain SNAP operations when federal budgets are disrupted. However, these funds have not been released. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has

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stated that the federal government has not only the tools but also the legal responsibility to continue SNAP during a shutdown. The Administration could use its existing transfer authority to supplement these reserves and prevent a lapse in benefits.

The impact on San Diego County would be severe. Nearly 400,000 residents, including 125,000 children and 100,000 seniors, rely on CalFresh, representing \$75 million in monthly benefits circulating through local grocery stores and small businesses. Without federal action, families will go hungry and local food banks will face unsustainable demand.

The County has already used its legislative authority to advocate for federal action. This item steps up these efforts, directing a formal letter to be transmitted to the USDA Administrator and coordination with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to support a unified statewide coalition urging immediate federal intervention.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This action supports the County's 2025-2030 Strategic Initiatives priority of Equity and health, specifically the goal to reduce disparities and ensure access for all through an optimized health and social service delivery system. Ensuring that SNAP benefits continue without interruption directly advances equitable access to food and nutrition, core determinants of health and well-being.

Respectfully submitted,



TERRA LAWSON-REMER  
Supervisor, Third District



PALOMA AGUIRRE  
Supervisor, First District

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/press/statements/trump-administration-is-legally-required-to-provide-snap-in-shutdown-contrary-to>