



THE WIDENING SNAP GAP: HOW FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS ARE INCREASING FOOD INSECURITY AMONG AAPI AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES SERVED BY CPC

Analysis of Chinese-American Planning Council's Service Populations

“ When I heard the news that the government wasn't releasing SNAP funds, I had to rethink my grocery list and buy cheaper food options. But with the cost of living so high, nothing feels cheap or affordable anymore. During the days I couldn't use my EBT card, I prioritized buying milk and yogurt for my children. I can handle being hungry, but my children are growing and need to eat well.

- CPC Queens Community Member ”

KEY FINDINGS

The passage of the federal budget bill in July 2025 is already having devastating impacts on our communities. With significant cuts to SNAP benefits, our families who rely heavily on this support for essential care and basic survival are facing an increasingly uncertain future.

- About 10,000 community members that we serve will be impacted by SNAP cuts and changes to eligibility with overwhelming numbers from Brooklyn and Manhattan.
- Approximately 2,000 community members will lose their SNAP benefits and many of these community members reside in Brooklyn.
- 3 out of every 4 community members that we serve who are on SNAP make below the federal poverty line (FPL).

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical federal safety-net program that helps millions of low-income households afford nutritious food. Many of the communities that rely on SNAP to put food on the table will feel these repercussions acutely, and AAPI families will be hit especially hard. Many of the communities that rely on SNAP to put food on the table will feel these repercussions acutely, and AAPI families will be hit especially hard. According to the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, 1 in 5 Asian individuals in the city live in mixed status households, compared to 12% citywide.¹ Cuts to SNAP will reverberate across entire family networks, affecting children, working adults, seniors, and caregivers alike. When paired with deep reductions to other social safety nets like Medicaid and Medicare, these challenges compound, creating an almost insurmountable barrier to health and economic stability for our most marginalized neighbors.

These proposed cuts will decimate our capacity to deliver essential services and inflict long-term harm on the individuals and families who depend on them. Our organization stands to lose staff, community members, and entire programs, services that generations within our community have come to trust as reliable sources of support. We provide SNAP navigation assistance, enrollment services, language-access resources, and other critical support systems that often serve as the only thing standing between our neighbors and crisis. Undermining these programs jeopardizes the well-being and stability of thousands of households across New York.

The impact of policy changes is already being felt. New work eligibility requirements went into effect on November 1st, leaving many New Yorkers in need now ineligible for SNAP. At the same time, OTDA is still in the process of receiving, interpreting, and implementing federal guidance on these changes, creating confusion for service providers and families who urgently need clarity. Without adequate resources and clear direction, community-based organizations like ours cannot fully support the communities that depend on us. These cuts and policy shifts will widen existing inequities and deepen poverty and continue to make New York unlivable for so many.



DISCUSSION

As part of the implementation of our universal intake system, we have been able to identify the number of community members that use our benefits enrollment assistance services, specifically SNAP.

We conducted an initial analysis in July as soon as the federal budget bill passed with a sample size of 8,277.

As of December 2nd 2025, our sample size has increased to 12,027, which includes the community members that access our benefits enrollment assistance services through our multi-social service programs at our three main community sites in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

Community-based organizations and food pantries continue to be overwhelmed as a direct result of the federal shutdown and it is critical that solutions that protect, expand, and invest into the SNAP program and overall infrastructure are included in the FY27 State budget cycle to mitigate the substantial gaps created by the Federal administration.

One of the largest government benefit programs that community members come to us for support is SNAP, whether it be for recertification, assistance on benefits enrollment, or inquiries on benefit protection measures. Below is a breakdown of an estimated number of community members across the five boroughs who will be impacted by these federal budget cuts in our second round of analysis:

| Borough | At Risk of Losing SNAP ² | At Risk of Losing or Receiving Reduced SNAP ³ |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Bronx | 15 | 69 |
| Brooklyn | 499 | 1363 |
| Manhattan | 449 | 2046 |
| Queens | 138 | 704 |
| Staten Island | 41 | 150 |
| Total | 1,142 | 4,332 |

In this analysis, we found that over 4,000 community members are at risk of losing or receiving reduced SNAP benefits as shown above. Another notable takeaway from the database is that 3,226 community members who are on SNAP have an average household income of below \$15,000 or between \$15,000-30,000. In other words, 3 out of every 4 community members that we serve who are on SNAP make below the federal poverty line (FPL). SNAP is a means for survival for community members and during a time when the cost of living is skyrocketing, these cuts are another cruel failure of our social safety net.

One limitation in our analysis is that the sample size within our in-progress database is limited in the second phase and does not encapsulate the full 80,000 community members we serve annually. In addition, the analysis only accounts for those who come in for benefits enrollment assistance. However, based on trends and estimates, we believe that about 10,000 community members will face cuts to their SNAP benefits or total loss of benefits.⁴

For many of our seniors who are on fixed incomes, the lack of SNAP benefits during the shutdown has created confusion, fear, and anxiety:

Xinxing Zheng and Biran Chen, 80, have been part of the CPC Brooklyn Senior Center for a decade. They say the recent halt in food-stamp benefits has caused real anxiety among older residents.

“Many seniors are convinced the assistance won’t come back,” Zheng said. “My wife and I have been going to our children’s homes for dinner, and it’s created an extra burden for them too.”

Chen shared the same worry. “A lot of seniors in our community are already in their seventies and eighties. We have no income, no pensions. Food stamps are the only thing keeping us fed. When the benefits stopped, many of us had to rely completely on the senior center’s lunches and the free produce just to get by.”

For both of them, the CPC senior center became a crucial lifeline.

“Within those two weeks, the center has done so much for us,” Zheng said. “Lunch is only seventy-five cents, with vegetables and meat, and it follows the nutrition guidelines for older adults. White rice makes our blood sugar spike, so they even serve us brown rice instead.”

He added, “In hard times, it’s community groups like CPC that help us get through. Seniors deserve proper care, and so do low-income immigrant communities. Being able to eat enough should be a basic right for anyone.”

Food pantries are increasingly overwhelmed and community-based organizations like CPC have stepped up in ensuring that our community needs are met by hosting emergency food distribution events.⁵ However, these resources will run out and the increase in demand is simply not sustainable. Just as many of our community members are already stretching insufficient benefits to cover multiple family members, our staff have been overwhelmed with inquiries from community members regarding SNAP support. Without this support, we anticipate a sharp rise in poverty, food and housing insecurity in our communities.

With the recent government shutdown and the withholding of emergency SNAP funds, many of our community members did not have the means to support their families. Compounded with pervasive SNAP theft, this was a moment in time where our social safety nets demonstrated that it was deeply cracking. Long-time Flushing resident and CPC community member of four years expressed the following in an interview:

“When I heard the news that the government wasn’t releasing SNAP funds, I had to rethink my grocery list and buy cheaper food options. But with the cost of living so high, nothing feels cheap or affordable anymore. During the days I couldn’t use my EBT card, I prioritized buying milk and yogurt for my children. I can handle being hungry, but my children are growing and need to eat well.”

Another big problem is that my benefits were stolen, and the government still hasn’t restored them. I lost over \$200 in benefits. Thankfully, CPC’s food pantries helped me get additional food like celery, potatoes, and string beans during this time.

SNAP is so important for my family and ensures my children are fed. I’m grateful that the benefits were restored after 10 days, but I hope this never happens again because so many people depend on this support.”

These are not just isolated stories, they represent a broader reality. The proposed cuts are not abstract policy shifts. They are life-and-death decisions for thousands of our community members. We are committed to fighting against these cuts at the federal level but there are meaningful solutions that New York can implement to ensure that the gaps created by these cuts are immediately addressed.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Transition EBT cards to more modern chip card technology to decrease the likelihood of SNAP theft from occurring by passing A699 (González-Rojas). The Senate version of the bill sponsored by Senator Serrano passed during the 2025 legislative session.
2. Pass the SNAP and Cash Assistance Victims Compensation Fund Myrie (S403) and Mitaynes (A3578) to be able to reimburse vulnerable New Yorkers who have been victims to SNAP theft.
3. Increase funding for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) to a total of \$8.5 million to enable community-based organizations to conduct outreach and increase participation in SNAP in all New York counties.
4. Funding for Double Up Food Bucks New York (DUFBNY) at \$6 million, Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance (HPNAP) at \$75 million, and Nourish NY at \$75 million.
5. Pass annual hunger reporting bills to ensure that data is collected on our communities to inform meaningful policy:
 - Department of Agriculture, Sponsored by AM Anderson (Awaiting Senate Sponsor)
 - Department of Health, Sponsored by Sen. Hinchey (S8553/A9168)
6. Raise the SNAP minimum benefit to \$100 (González-Rojas (A1318) & May (S665)) to help low-income and working families support themselves especially when the cost of living and cost of groceries are skyrocketing.
7. Invest \$244 million to protect 41,000 newly excluded refugees, asylees, humanitarian parolees, and others who are newly ineligible for SNAP and to extend food assistance benefits for 65,000 noncitizen households with children as recommended by the NYS Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council.
8. Raise revenue to fill in the gaps by implementing a progressive tax structure on the ultra-wealthy to be able to meet growing needs and address the economic shortfalls caused by the federal government.

We have seen the drastic impacts on families and individuals when SNAP benefits are delayed or unavailable. Food insecurity has spillover effects impacting every aspect of our daily lives from public safety, education, to the local economy. To prevent further costs for the State and most importantly, to protect our vulnerable communities, we must implement strong safeguards and accountability mechanisms at the state level. Our social safety net is essential to our collective well-being, and it deserves focused attention and reliable support. We look forward to working with advocates, elected officials, and government partners in the upcoming budget session to ensure that our State response is robust and meaningfully meets the needs of our AAPI, immigrant, and low-income communities.

Endnotes

¹ Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. (2025). A demographic snapshot: NYC's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) immigrant population. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/Fact-Sheet-NYCs-API-Immigrant-Population.pdf>

² These figures include refugees, asylees, temporary non-immigrant community members, and individuals uncomfortable disclosing immigration status.

³ This broader category includes all community members, such as citizens, non-citizens, immigrants, etc.

⁴ Parra, D. (2025, December 2). New York sues Trump administration over SNAP changes that would exclude thousands of legal immigrants. City Limits.

⁵ Khawaja, N. (2025, November 12). Chinese New Yorkers hit hard by SNAP interruption. NY1. <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2025/11/12/chinese-new-yorkers-hit-hard-by-snap-interruption>