



2018 SNAP Position Paper

Oppose Weakening of Options for People Who Rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to Prevent Hunger

The Western Center on Law and Poverty represents California's poorest residents in policy and budget discussions affecting housing, health and public benefits. We oppose efforts to reduce food choice for people who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California, to prevent hunger.

While we believe that people who are promoting the policy are earnest in their intent to protect low-income Americans from poor health outcomes,¹ we do not believe that food choice limits will achieve this goal, and instead we believe they will have many unhelpful, even if unintended, consequences. More fundamentally, Western Center has a long-standing opposition to public policy approaches that create differential treatment by limiting choices available to California's low-income consumers, who, by virtue of being poor, are already limited in their choices. The policy intervention is denigrating to low-income Californians who rely on SNAP to prevent hunger; would be costly and complicated for program administrators and grocers to implement; would undermine efforts to expand access to, and strengthen integrity in, the program; and, leads us away from finding meaningful solutions to diet-related diseases among the poor. In this position paper, we lay out the many reasons why this is so.

Instead of erecting complicated and derogatory new policies for low-income consumers, impacting their grocery store experience, we should be employing policies that are proven to make a difference in improving healthy food purchase, like increasing the monthly benefit.

Hunger is still the Leading Nutrition Problem among Low-Income Americans

Over 40 million Americans, 4 million of whom live in California struggle to prevent hunger every day. SNAP is our country's most important defense against hunger. SNAP benefit allotments are calculated based on household income, resources, expenses and size using the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) to determine food costs based on family size. The maximum monthly allotment in Federal Fiscal Year 2017-18 is \$192 for a single person and \$640 for a family of four. Nationally, only 41 percent of households receive the maximum allotment and 23 percent of household receive less than half of the maximum allotment. In California, the average person would receive \$138 in CalFresh benefits and the average household of three (3) would receive \$287 a month. That is equal to \$1.15 a meal for one person and \$2.40 a meal for three (3) persons. This amount is less than the National Institute of Medicine cites as less than what is needed to attain a healthy diet.

¹ On August 10, 2018, the past three Secretaries for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) posted an opinion piece to advocate for Congress to consider nutrition in the Farm Bill debates and, in doing so, allow for pilots of food choice limits: <http://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/401209-focusing-on-nutrition-is-paramount-to-getting-a-sound-bipartisan-farm-bill#.W286rwj-xNM.facebook>

In all cases, SNAP benefits are only expected to supplement, not supplant, the food budgets of participating households, that is, SNAP recipients are expected to use other income or other food assistance to make up the difference in their food budget. In fact, because SNAP benefits are so low, nearly one-third of households receiving SNAP still must rely on food banks to meet their basic need food needs². Many, who do not have access to a food bank or other support systems, experience food insecurity the last week of the month. Still, despite years of legislative advocacy to increase adequacy of the benefit, benefits have actually gone down in recent years.³

SNAPs an Effective Anti-Hunger Program That Already Supports Good Nutrition

Despite the rhetoric that SNAP recipients eat poorly, the truth is that they eat no less poorly than the rest of Americans and, in fact, SNAP helps them eat more nutritiously as it works today. As highlighted in a report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM),⁴ SNAP recipients are less likely to be food insecure than eligible non-recipients; in other words, the program meets the central goal to alleviate hunger. Controlling for other factors, research has also shown that SNAP participants are not more likely than eligible non-participants to be overweight or obese and that the program does not contribute to the current obesity crisis in the U.S.⁵ In fact, by both improving dietary intake and reducing food insecurity, participation in federal nutrition programs plays a critical role in obesity prevention. For this reason, increasing participation in the federal nutrition programs, including SNAP, is a childhood obesity prevention strategy recommended by the IOM and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity.⁶ In fact, recent research demonstrates that receipt of SNAP benefits helped reduce health problems later in life, improved educational outcomes, lifted women's economic self-sufficiency, and improved family's immediate financial situation.⁷

SNAP Benefit Increase Has Been Proven to Increase the Purchase of Nutritious Food

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (Pub.L. 111-5) increased monthly benefits for participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Recovery Act provided several critical benefits for SNAP participants by enhancing their purchasing power and boosting nutrition all while providing a critical, efficient economic stimulus. It did this, in part, by increasing the benefit beyond the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) standard used to determine the minimal monthly cost of food for an eligible household, and consequently raised SNAP's maximum

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84981/ap-077.pdf?v=42979>

³ Congress has failed to act for several years on proposed legislation that would increase the benefit amount and remove the shelter cost deduction, policy proposed in H.R. 1276 (Adams, NC-12) Closing the Meal Gap Act. Congress has also failed to act on legislation that would protect vulnerable populations from hunger, including H.R. 1078 (Davis, CA-53) Military Hunger Prevention Act.; H.R. 3875 (Lawson, FL-5) College Student Hunger Act; or the Disabled Veterans Nutrition Fairness Act, introduced several years running by Representative Jackie Speier beginning in 2013.

⁴ Consensus Report released January 17, 2013, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the Evidence to Determine Benefit Adequacy," available at <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/Supplemental-Nutrition-Assistance-Program-Examining-the-Evidence-to-Define-Benefit-Adequacy.aspx>

⁵ Hofferth, S. L. & Curtin, S. (2005). Poverty, food programs, and childhood obesity. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(4), 703-726, and Linz, P., Lee, M., & Bell, L. (2004). Obesity, poverty, and participation in food assistance programs. *Family Programs*, FSP-04-PO. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation.

⁶ Institute of Medicine, 2009; Institute of Medicine, 2011a; White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, 2010. Reports found at: <http://www.iom.edu/Activities/Nutrition/SNAPadequacy.aspx> and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/childhood-obesity-task-force-unveils-action-plan-solving-problem-childhood-obesity->

⁷ http://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/twelve_facts_about_food_insecurity_and_snap

monthly benefit levels by 13.6%. A key feature of the Act was an across-the-board increase in benefits for all households. This benefit increase has been documented to show critical economic and nutritional impacts – delivering over \$40 billion in additional SNAP funding to states from 2009-2014, reducing rates of food insecurity and increasing access to healthy food by providing low-income households with additional resources.⁸

In 2010, when Congress passed legislation (P.L. 111-126) to accelerate the sunset of the ARRA benefit increase, low-income Californians experienced a significant cut in their benefits. Given ARRA's notable impact in reducing hunger, improving nutrition and boosting our economy, the "cliff effect" associated with the resulting steep decline in benefits, cut benefits by an average of \$28 a month for over 2 million households--resulting in a loss of \$583 million in benefits to California.⁹

SNAP Food Bans Singles Out Poor Consumers and Encourages Stereotypes

The policy intervention proposed by academic and public policy elite perpetuates, and may even be promulgated by, the misperception that poor Americans who rely on public benefits make worse decisions than their more affluent neighbors would under similar conditions. This just simply isn't the case. According to a Gallup Poll released in 2012, nearly half of Americans of all economic stratus drink two sodas a day.¹⁰ Sweetened, high caloric drinks, including but not limited to soda, are a way of life in America. Public Health advocates have long argued that a broad-sweeping culture change is needed to reverse this trend. A proposal to limit consumption only among poor Americans by banning the use of SNAP benefits to purchase these beverages not only flies in the face of years of research about how to reverse these troubling trends, it also perpetuates negative stereotypes targeted at low-income consumers by suggesting that they make worse decisions than people with higher incomes.¹¹

SNAP Food Bans Would Distract from Monitoring Program Misuse

There have always been clear and long-established limitations on the types of groceries that may be purchased using SNAP benefits at participating stores.¹² Recipients cannot use SNAP to purchase non-food items, like alcohol, tobacco products, toiletries, vitamins and medicine.¹³ SNAP purchases are exempt from all sales taxes and other taxes and fees¹⁴ and cannot be exchanged for cash. Banning the purchase of certain sweetened beverages for purchase with SNAP will complicate these easy-to-

⁸ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-benefit-boost-in-2009-recovery-act-provided-economic-stimulus-and>

⁹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-benefit-boost-in-2009-recovery-act-provided-economic-stimulus-and>

¹⁰ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/156116/Nearly-Half-Americans-Drink-Soda-Daily.aspx>

¹¹ <https://talkpoverty.org/2017/01/16/shopping-cart-food-stamp-household-not-new-york-times-reported/>
<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/01/20/public-editor/friday-mailbag-soda-the-health-act-and-mrs-trump.html>
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/01/30/the-bitter-truth-about-sugar/3SUfEWRAgFv8Wo5xtlSCGJ/story.html>
<https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2012/10/how-sweet-is-it-color.pdf>
http://www.realclearmarkets.com/2017/01/25/should_government_control_what_the_poor_eat_201384.html
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/01/food-stamps-snap-welfare-soda-new-york-times/>
<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2014/03/junk-food-stamps-snap>

¹² Determining Product Eligibility for Purchase with SNAP Benefits" Published by the United States Department of Agriculture in January 2010 <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/eligibility.pdf>

¹³ Food items allowed under SNAP are defined by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

¹⁴ 7 C.F.R. § 272.1

follow guidelines and not only result in a complicated, and potentially embarrassing, experience for consumers, but could make the enforcement of current limits on benefit use more difficult.

Under current law, when SNAP is used to purchase items banned under the program, the consequences are quite serious. State, counties and federal SNAP administrators in partnership with district attorneys throughout the country are charged with monitoring the use of SNAP to purchase ineligible items as well as other card misuse, like trading or selling Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards or benefits. Intentional misuse of SNAP EBT benefits is considered fraud and failing to follow the rules can result in an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). The penalties for an IPV are disqualification, and recipients can be fined up to \$250,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 20 years. Disqualification for an IPV is given for: 12 months for the first violation; 24 months for the second violation; and forever for the third violation. There are serious consequences for vendors, and employees as a result, who intentionally and unintentionally are caught selling banned items to people who use their SNAP benefits to purchase them. Vendors that violate program regulations and policies, for any reason, may be subject to monetary claims, civil money penalties, suspensions, terminations or disqualification from the SNAP program or any combination of these sanctions. They must also be sanctioned from participating as a vendor in the Women, Infant and Children Program.¹⁵

It is unclear whether the types of bans proposed would use the same threshold for current unallowable purchases (alcoholic beverages and non-food items for example). If not, it is unclear how a lesser threshold would be monitored or how the monitoring of a lesser threshold wouldn't impede in or distract from the enforcement of existing restrictions on use. If it does not set a lesser threshold, that would mean that purchase of a sweetened beverage, for example, with SNAP benefits would constitute a violation so severe as to warrant a charge of IPV and potential loss of benefits for the recipient and disqualification for the retailer. This has been one of the consistently cited concerns raised by USDA throughout multiple administrations. In their 2004 member, they questioned "how retailer compliance activities would be impacted," stating that "[a]administrative difficulties ranging from what penalties, if any, would be brought against retailers for noncompliance with the restrictions imposed by the waiver and what entity, the State or USDA, would be responsible for monitoring compliance would ensue."¹⁶

Even if the questions of consequences and monitoring could be worked out, the effort needed to implement these types of policies would not be inconsequential for SNAP vendors, retailers and their employees. A policy which establishes that certain food or beverages would not be allowed for SNAP purchase might require vendors to distinguish between a soda and a diet soda, for example or between low-fat graham crackers or regular graham crackers. It is unclear whether EBT point of sale (POS) technology can be programmed to identify and deny the purchase of one product but not the other and whether it could be programmed do so without significant staff time and oversight on the part of the vendor. Additionally, many smaller markets may not have POS

¹⁵ 7 CFR §246.12(1)(vii)

¹⁶ Letter from USDA Regional Administrator Ollice C. Holden to Ms. Maria Gomez, Assistant Commissioner of Minnesota Department of Human Services, dated May 4, 2004, available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2004/050404.htm>

technology to facilitate the implementation of the policy and so would rely on an employee to visually distinguish between a beverage that had ten calories and one that did not.

For vendors who accept SNAP, these types of proposals would add one more requirement to an already extensive list of rules that vendors must abide by.¹⁷ Currently, vendor compliance training and monitoring falls under the complete authority of the USDA. A change in vendor requirements that would be implemented only in California stores would require a circumvention of this USDA vendor relationship and it is unclear what unforeseen fiscal and programmatic repercussions there would be as a result. This is especially true for larger retail stores or stores located on the border serving more than one state.

Problems with SNAP Food Choice Bans have Been Long-Documented

Over the years, the USDA, being the agency with jurisdiction over the SNAP program, has received and denied requests to ban certain food products and has documented concern over the implications of these policy proposals, finding “There are serious problems with the rationale, feasibility and potential effectiveness of proposals to limit what people can buy with Food Stamps.”¹⁸ Administrators have cited lack of healthy food guidelines, the cost of implementing a system to control over 300,000 food products, the complication of coding approximately 12,000 new food products annually, the question of enforcement in tens of thousands of stores¹⁹ and the complication and further stigmatization that recipients would experience at checkout counters as some of the reasons why this kind of proposal would not be feasible.

In 2004, Minnesota applied for a waiver of federal SNAP regulation which defines “eligible food” as: [a]ny food or food product intended for human consumption except alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and hot foods and hot food products prepared for immediate consumption; [s]eeds and plants to grow foods for the personal consumption of eligible households; as well as a few other discrete categories.²⁰ Minnesota wanted to define “eligible food” in such a way as to prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks.²¹ This was the first SNAP food restriction waiver request ever submitted to the USDA. The USDA denied the request based officially on its legal merits. However, the agency also provided a strong critique of the proposal’s substantive content and explained that due to the “questionable merits” of the proposal, the agency would not even consider granting the waiver as part of a demonstration project, another waiver granting mechanism that the USDA has.²²

In 2011, USDA Secretary Vilsack denied a waiver request submitted by the City of New York that would have authorized a two-year pilot to outlaw the use of SNAP to purchase sugar sweetened

¹⁷ http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/pdfs/Retailer_Training_Guide.pdf

¹⁸ “Implications of Restricting the Use of Food Stamp Benefits – Summary,” published by the United States Department of Agriculture in March 2007. Found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/ProgramOperations/FSPFoodRestrictions.pdf>

¹⁹ California Grocer’s Association *Annual Buyers’ Guide* lists over 5,000 retail grocers in California.

²⁰ 7 Code of Federal Regulations § 271.2

²¹ Letter from USDA Regional Administrator Ollice C. Holden to Ms. Maria Gomez, Assistant Commissioner of Minnesota Department of Human Services, dated May 4, 2004, available at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2004/050404.htm>

²² *Id.*

beverages.²³ About the denial, Secretary Vilsack said, the department “has a longstanding tradition of supporting and promoting incentive-based solutions that are better-suited for the working families, elderly and other low-income individuals.”²⁴ Maine, with their own unique list of foods to ban, was the last state to request a waiver. In a Jan. 16, 2018 letter to Maine Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Ricker Hamilton, the USDA outlined concerns that a ban would increase administrative costs; impose burdens on small businesses and retailers; choose winners and losers in the food industry; create difficult decisions about the nutritional values of allowable or excluded foods; and “restrict what individuals could eat in their own homes without demonstrating clear evidence of meaningful health outcomes.”

State Proposals to Ban Food Highlight Significant Variance in Banned Food List

Even if policy makers agreed that banning choice in SNAP were a good policy, state legislation introduced on the topic highlight how doing so in an industry that relies on national standards would be. In California, a 2012 legislative proposal²⁵ to ban the use of SNAP to purchase drinks with more than 10 calories per cup, salty snacks, birthday cakes with more than 1/4th of an inch of frosting and fruit cobbler never even got a hearing.²⁶ In Wisconsin, they have considered legislation that would bar SNAP recipients from buying shellfish, certain types of cheese and potato products as well as limit SNAP spending on organic food. Missouri lawmakers wanted to stop recipients from buying seafood – including canned tuna fish - energy drinks, soda, cookies, chips and steak. Even in cases where legislation was passed, none of these states have received approval from USDA officials to ban foods in SNAP. In fact, each state legislature that has proposed a ban on food choice in the program has proposed a different list. This significant variance in legislative lists highlights the significant variation in American’s beliefs about what is healthy and what foods are culturally, or regionally important.

SNAP Food Ban Would Limit Ability to Pursue More Promising Approaches

According to a recent report of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 68 percent of all adults, not just those who are poor, are obese (72 percent prevalence among men; 64 percent among women). More troubling, obesity rates among children ages six to eleven have increased fourfold since 1960, and tripled amongst teenagers between 12 and 19 years over the same period. According to the Office of the Surgeon General, for the first time in history, our children may have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, as a result of diet-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. These conditions are most prevalent in America’s historically

²³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2011). Memo to Elizabeth Berlin, Executive Deputy Commissioner, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, from Jessica Shahin, Associate Administrator, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (August 19, 2011)

²⁴ NYT, August 19, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/20/nyregion/ban-on-using-food-stamps-to-buy-soda-rejected-by-usda.html>

²⁵ <http://www.bakersfieldcalifornian.com/health/x738924672/Rubio-to-food-stamp-recipients-No-soda-for-you>

<http://news.yahoo.com/california-food-stamp-program-tries-grow-amidst-proposed-203100141--finance.html>

<http://www.kget.com/news/local/story/State-Senator-Michael-Rubio-proposes-food-stamp/yCERcsIkq0OnMjBk74htlg.csp>

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/california-politics/2013/02/california-lawmaker-wants-to-banish-sugary-drinks-from-california-menu.html>

<http://www.californiahealthline.org/articles/2013/2/5/lawmaker-unveils-bill-to-ban-sugary-drinks-from-california-menu.html>

<http://www.californiahealthline.org/articles/2013/2/5/lawmaker-unveils-bill-to-ban-sugary-drinks-from-california-menu.html>

²⁶ Senate Bill 471 (Rubio) http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120SB471

excluded and seriously underserved urban and rural communities. Unequal health outcomes are just one of the many ways in which poor Californians experience health disparities and there is undoubtedly more that we can and should be doing to address these inequities in life expectancy and quality of life. But the severity of the crisis requires us to be very thoughtful and methodical about how we spend our resources and the interventions we chose. With no strong research-based evidence to support the thesis that restricting SNAP purchases would actually result in healthier food consumption by low-income households, food choice bans do not meet that bar.

According to the USDA, SNAP rarely comprises the entire food budget, with approximately 70 percent of SNAP recipients expected to purchase a portion of their food with non-SNAP resources.²⁷ There is no research that suggests restricting the use of SNAP would affect food purchases of recipient households. Poor nutrition choices are, in part, made due to the prevalence of food systems that offer limited access to healthy foods for all people and especially those with the fewest resources. To the extent that low-income families are buying less healthy foods, it is well documented that they do so to stretch their food budgets to prevent hunger throughout the month because these foods offer a cheap, readily available source of calories.²⁸ The first step in ensuring healthier food choices is to make sure that healthy choices are available to, and affordable for, everyone.

Not only is there no evidence that it would reduce health disparities for poor Californians, food choice bans may actually contribute to problems in unforeseen ways. There is increasing evidence which shows that everyday stresses, including the stress resulting from lack of agency and choice, faced regularly by people with low-incomes, are contributors to obesity.²⁹ A policy that further reduces choice and contributes to stigma involved in using SNAP at the grocery store might actually contribute to obesity stress triggers. Additionally, if food choice restrictions do result in a decrease in consumption of sweetened beverages among SNAP recipients, it would do so in a way that prevents a decision to limit or end consumption of sweetened beverages to be owned and celebrated by the SNAP recipient. Like all Californians, poor Californians need the opportunity to be empowered by their own healthy decisions and to model good behaviors to their children or other family members. Food choice ban proposals rely on a solution which circumvents that process by forcing people's decisions rather than allowing them to be made by one's own volition.

Instead, food choice ban proposals are based on an untested idea that has been unsuccessful in gaining approval from federal policy makers in either Republican or Democrat led administrations and does not represent the most recent and best thinking about healthy food promotion among low-income households. If implemented, it impedes the ability to design the kinds of policy interventions

²⁷ In California, an average family of three with an income of \$694 and paying \$500 a month in rent is expected to contribute approximately \$100 of their own income to their food budget and will only receive approximately \$470 in SNAP benefits. To understand this match, see Western Center's *FFY 10-11 Food Stamp Calculator*.

²⁸ Larson, N. I. & Story, M. T. (2011). Food insecurity and weight status among U.S. children and families: a review of the literature. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 40(2), 166-173. Basiotis, P. P. & Lino, M. (2002). Food insufficiency and prevalence of overweight among adult women. *Nutrition Insight*, 26. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Drewnowski, A. & Specter, S. E. (2004). Poverty and obesity: the role of energy density and energy costs. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 79, 6-16.

²⁹ *Chronic Social Stress Linked to Obesity* (J. Pederson, Sept. 2010), The American Psychological Society

using SNAP that we know will work. Western Center has supported some of these alternative policy interventions that would more appropriately, more successfully, and more respectfully utilize SNAP to improve nutrition and health outcomes for poor Americans. These include “bonus bucks” for produce purchases, EBT access at all farmers’ markets, expanding the SNAP restaurant meals program for recipients who are elderly, disabled or homeless,³⁰ and, as mentioned earlier, simply improving the benefit adequacy so that healthier food choices are within reach of SNAP recipients. America has an abundance of opportunity, resource and ingenuity to take on the often overlapping problems of hunger, malnutrition and obesity but if we limit ourselves to this stigmatizing, unproven approach, we will distract the attention and pull from the resources available to consider and implement them. Research has shown that one of the simplest ways to improve quality of food consumed by poor Americans is to make sure that they have adequate resources to purchase them.

Food Choice Bans are Simply the Wrong Approach

Poor nutrition among America’s poorest is a significant issue that warrants the attention of Congress and the Administration, but the policy intervention called for by academics and policy making elite to promote food choice restrictions is not right for SNAP and not right for the people the program serves. The restriction on consumer food choice would establish a differential treatment of SNAP consumers, unduly complicate SNAP experience for vendors and increase negative stigma long associated with the program. Removing choices from people who, simply as a consequence of being poor, have very few choices to begin with is not a solution to any problem. Proposals to restrict consumer food choice in SNAP also detract from meaningful efforts to increase participation in the program and to meaningfully improve nutrition outcomes for low-income Americans.

Simply put, the SNAP program is already a program that plays a critical role in reducing hunger, food insecurity and obesity among low-income recipients. It achieves this by subsidizing the food budgets of very poor individuals and families, allowing them to purchase their groceries in a way that is similar to how non-participants make their purchases. The most promising action we could take to increase the ability of SNAP to improve nutrition outcomes among low-income Americans would be to increase participation among those who are eligible and to increase the benefit level among those who participate. Any action that doesn’t pursue those tandem goals only distracts from them and threatens to undermine the bedrock of America’s most important anti-hunger program.

About Western Center on Law and Poverty: Western Center on Law and Poverty works to ensure that low-income Californians can easily access safe and affordable housing, adequate health care, and safety net services. For more information about the our SNAP advocacy, visit www.wclp.org or contact Jessica Bartholow,³¹ jbartholow@wclp.org

³⁰ <https://capitalandmain.com/living-homeless-in-california-on-the-street-theres-more-to-eating-than-food-0524>

³¹ Jessica Bartholow is considered an expert on the topic of food choice bans in SNAP. You can hear more of her thoughts in this hour long radio debate on the topic of SNAP food choice restrictions. A recording of the debate can be found at: <https://ww2.kqed.org/forum/2013/12/03/should-food-stamp-users-be-blocked-from-buying-junk-food/>