



## Food Insecurity & the Scaling Back of Food Assistance

### Background

Many North Carolinians—including children, families, and older adults—face hunger and go without adequate and nutritious foods on a regular basis. North Carolina is the 9<sup>th</sup> most food-insecure state in the nation, but the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps reduce food hardship. It is the largest anti-hunger program in the nation and plays a critical role in ensuring that North Carolinians have enough food to eat. SNAP also significantly reduces poverty, improves children’s health outcomes, and helps minimize tough choices like either feeding your children or paying rent on time.

With the increase in the kind of jobs that don’t pay enough to afford the basics, it can be tough to put enough food on the table even when you have a steady job. In 2015, SNAP reached 1.6 million North Carolinians, targeting the most vulnerable folks to help ensure that older adults, veterans, and children get enough to eat each day. SNAP benefits help to stimulate the state’s economy too, pumping upward of \$2 billion into the economy.

### State lawmakers chose to unnecessarily restrict food aid for childless adults

This year, the harsh three-month SNAP time limit returned for childless, non-disabled adults who aren’t able to find work, volunteer, or job training activities totaling 20 hours per week. The time limit would have returned for 23 counties regardless of state action due to an improving economy in those counties. The remaining 77 counties qualified for a year-long waiver, but the Governor and legislature permanently banned state waivers after July 2016, regardless of the next economic downturn. The time limit is harsh:

- It applies to people who live in “extreme” poverty. These folks have an average annual income of \$2,200, or just 19 percent of the poverty line, while on SNAP.
- It harms vulnerable groups like veterans, youth aging out of foster care, people who lack a high school diploma, and under-unemployed workers who want more hours.
- It is not a test of one’s willingness to work. It applies regardless of whether these individuals are actually able to find employment or training opportunities.

North Carolina does not have a plan in place to provide a job opening, volunteer position, or skills training opportunity to all individuals subject to the time limit. Most counties have more people looking for work than jobs available and only 9 counties operate a SNAP employment and training program. And volunteer postings totaling 20 hours a week are hard to come by in many urban areas, let alone more rural settings.

## Questions for Candidates

- *Besides job growth, what will you do to reduce high rates of food hardship in NC?*
- *Would you sponsor a bill to reverse the permanent ban on state waivers from the harsh three-month time limit?*
- *Do you support investing state dollars into SNAP employment and training programs so more counties can help vulnerable adults learn basic skills and land a job?*