



EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

Every Texan **Opposes** HB 343 by Cain

Relating to prohibiting the purchase of certain food and drink items under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

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Every Texan opposes HB 343 by Cain as it stigmatizes Texans who use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to pay for food by imposing complicated and unworkable restrictions on what they can buy with their federally paid benefits.

SNAP acts as a buffer against hunger for low-income working families, seniors, and people with disabilities by supplementing food budgets and making it possible for low-income Texans to buy the food they need. SNAP (formerly “food stamps”) is the first line of defense for 3.7 million low-income Texans who rely on it to help feed their families. One out of every seven Texans receives SNAP, and more than 2.4 million Texas children receive SNAP benefits. Because Black and Hispanic Texans are more likely to work in low-paying jobs with few benefits, SNAP is critical to their ability to put food on the table. While 6% of White Texans rely on SNAP, 20% of all Black and Hispanic families in Texas depend on SNAP.

As SNAP benefits can be used only on food items at supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers’ markets it allows families the freedom to buy foods that meet the cultural and dietary needs of their families with dignity using the Lone Star Card. Research shows that people on SNAP buy similar foods to other Americans and have the same diet quality as low-income families not on SNAP.¹

What Benefits Do SNAP Recipients Receive?

SNAP targets benefits according to need. Very poor households receive more SNAP benefits than households closer to the poverty line since they need more help affording an adequate diet. SNAP recipients in Texas received \$4.77 billion in benefits in 2019.^a



Fiscal Year 2019

Average monthly SNAP benefit for each household member:	\$125
Average SNAP benefit per person per meal:	\$1.28

While SNAP is critical to the health of millions of Texans, the average benefit is only \$1.28 per meal and many families live in food deserts with limited access to affordable healthy food options. Restricting food choice will not improve the diets of SNAP families. Instead restrictions make it much harder for shoppers to determine which items they can afford to buy and stigmatizes them for needing SNAP. Federal officials have never approved a waiver on restrictions because of the problems. The solution to improving diets is to raise SNAP benefits so people can afford healthier options and promote more nutrition education for all Texans.

Source: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2015/march/restricting-sugar-sweetened-beverages-from-snap-purchases-not-likely-to-lower-consumption/>