



EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

Every Texan **Supports** HB 1230 by Ortega

Relating to exclusion of certain resources in determining eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

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Every Texan supports HB 1230 by Ortega as it will reduce hunger in Texas by updating the state's outdated vehicle asset limits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to more accurately reflect the true cost of reliable transportation.

As the record long lines of cars waiting for help from food banks throughout the pandemic have shown, millions of Texans are a paycheck away from hunger. These are families that work, and own cars to get to work, but have limited savings so they have little ability to absorb a loss of income. SNAP is designed to respond quickly to crises like the loss of a job by supplementing food budgets and making it possible for struggling families to buy the food they need at their local grocery store. But many of the families waiting in line at food banks across the state were there because of Texas' outdated vehicle asset test limits that disqualified them from SNAP even with little to no income to buy food.

Texas chooses to enforce stringent SNAP eligibility guidelines that go beyond federal requirements. In addition to our income limit, since 2001 Texas has allowed a resource limit of \$5,000 in countable cash, a first vehicle worth up to \$15,000, and any additional vehicles can be worth up to \$4,650 (any excess vehicle value is counted towards the cash resource limit). These limits were never indexed to inflation and no longer reflect the current cost of a safe and dependable family car or truck.



The negative impact of outdated vehicle limits is magnified because to receive SNAP in Texas most adults must work or be looking for work through the SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program for at least 30 hours per week unless they are exempt. As public transportation options are extremely limited, 90 percent of Texans drive to work¹ and maintaining steady employment requires owning a vehicle capable of passing the state's rigorous inspection system. The current vehicle limits, especially the lower limit of \$4,650 which was originally set in the 1970's, can no longer cover the cost of a reliable car (currently a 2005 Ford Expedition with **237,000 miles** is listed for \$4,650).

HB 1230 updates Texas' SNAP vehicle limits to be up to \$25,000 for any car a family may own and indexes to inflation. By updating and aligning the allowed vehicle limit to one easy to administer value more reflective of today's prices, two-parent and multi-generational families will no longer be penalized for needing more than one car and will be able to turn to SNAP in times of need.

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.