

2026 Legislative Priorities

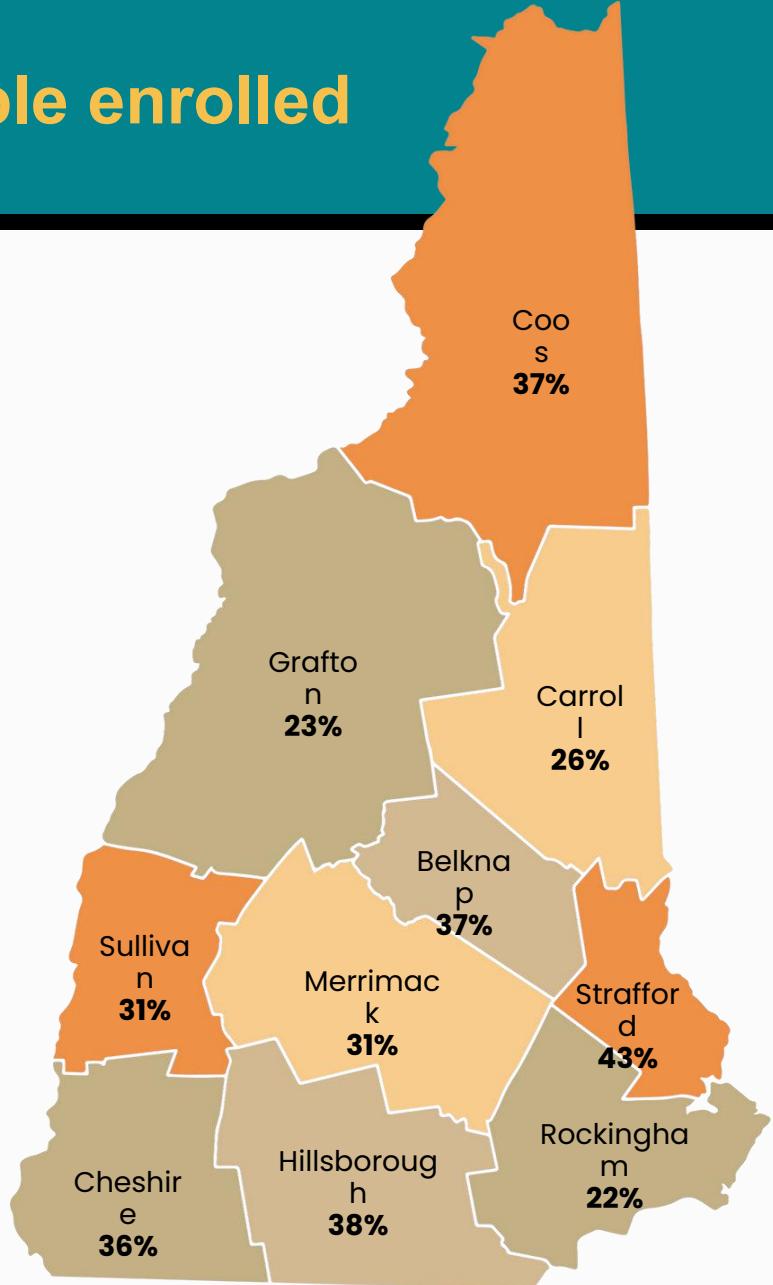
Strafford County

NH is 39th in the Nation for SNAP Participation

32% of SNAP eligible people enrolled

Strong enrollment means stronger local economies

- ▶ Each SNAP dollar has over **\$1.50 in economic impact**
- ▶ **SNAP supports local businesses**, including **1,063 retailers in NH**, which redeemed a total of **\$302,706,064** in 2023.
- ▶ In Fiscal year 2024, SNAP brought **\$154,254,645** to the state.



Who uses relies on the average \$5.49/day SNAP benefit in NH?



Veterans



Older Adults



Children



People with
disabilities

- ▶ SNAP helps **76,628** people in New Hampshire put food on the table. (6% of NH households)

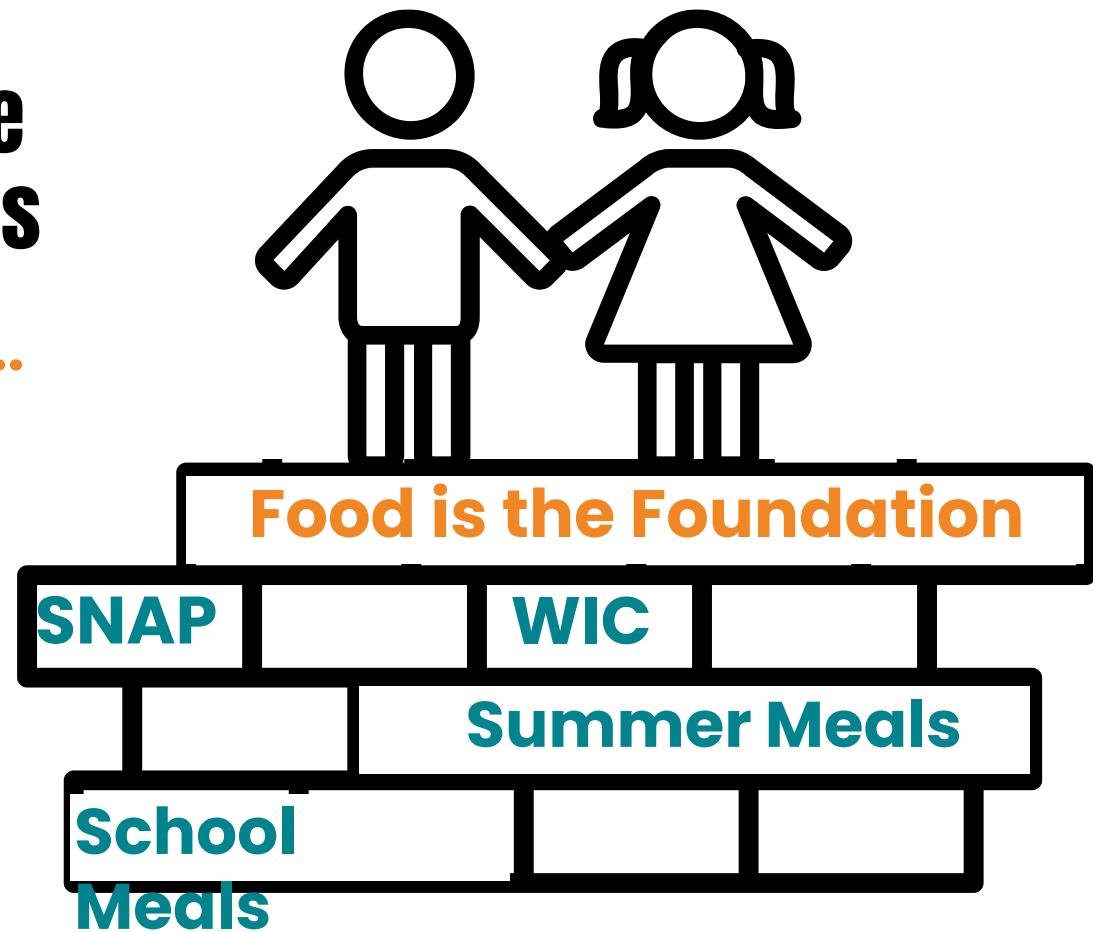
- ▶ **77%** of NH SNAP households on average included someone who was working.

SNAP connects children to free school meals

Children living in SNAP households are directly certified for free school meals

Meaning more food secure children that...

- Experience overall better health
- Have lower rates of communicable disease, excess weight, & asthma
- Need less health care services and emergency room care



Support

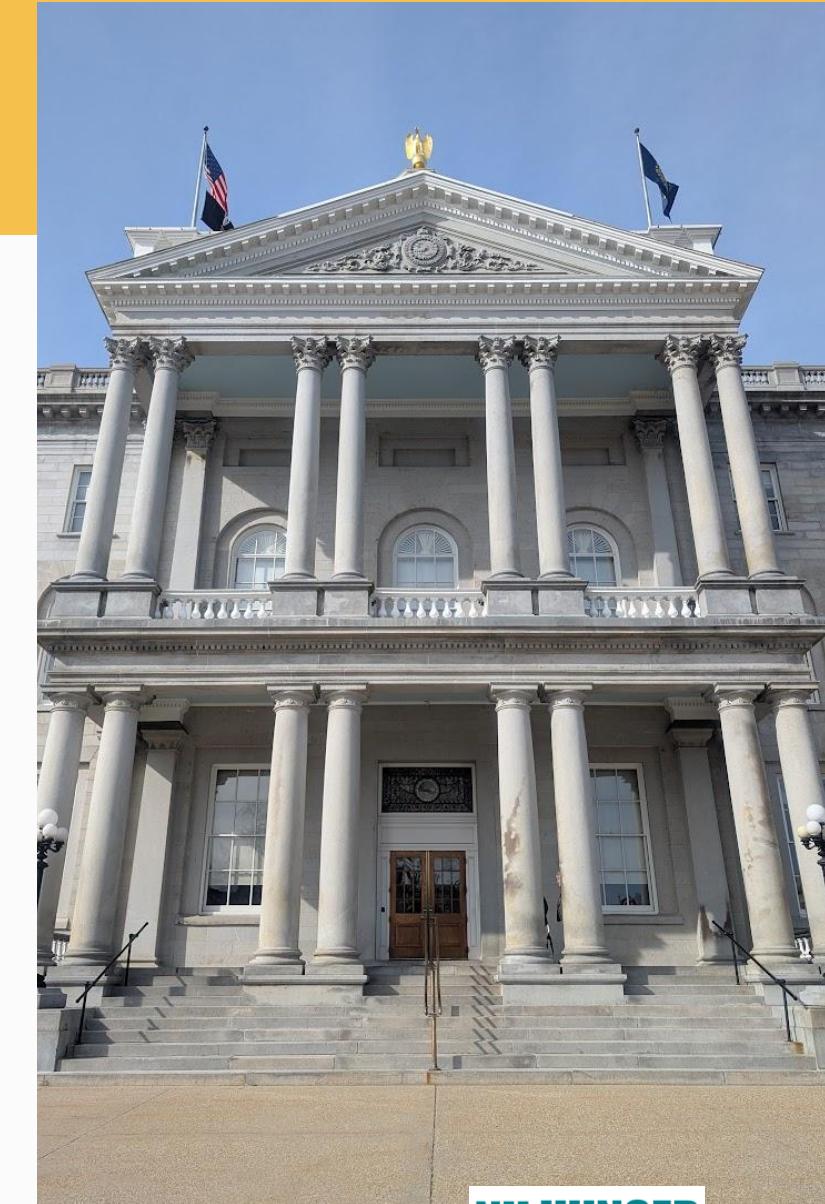
SNAP Administrative Cost

Raise the **\$4.6M in new administrative costs to run the SNAP program** as of October 1, 2026.

- **SB 603** (pulls from DHHS budget)

**Hearing was 1/20*

- **HB 1750** (appropriates \$4.6M) (Hearing 2/2, 11:00)



Support

School Meals

- **SB 517:** Raise the eligibility for free meals to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (schools pay half). *Senate Education OTP *Unanimously*
- **HB 1574:** Extending Free and reduced lunch for special education students up to age 22 **Hearing was 1/14*



Support

Summer EBT

- **HB 1727:** Allow the Department of Education (DOE) to collect student addresses and share them with DHHS for the sole purpose of distributing Summer Electronics Benefit Transfer
 - *Hearing was 1/14



Oppose *Attacks on SNAP/ SNAP Restrictions*

- **SB 615/HB 1797**
 - Limit what SNAP recipients can buy with their SNAP EBT cards (no soda or candy)
 - Lift Categorical Eligibility: Rolls back SNAP eligibility, adds back asset tests
 - Impose unnecessary and burdensome reporting on NH DHHS
 - **SB 615** *Hearing was 1/14, but you can still call and email the Senate HHS Committee
- **HB 1773**
 - Limits what SNAP recipients can buy with their SNAP EBT cards (no sweetened drinks or candy) *Not yet scheduled



Why do we Oppose SNAP Restrictions?

No Proof, Just Punishment

SNAP restrictions don't improve diet quality or health outcomes.

- **Restrictions ignore the real drivers of poor diets:** insufficient income to buy healthy food and lack of proximity to full-service grocery stores.
- **Diets of SNAP participants mirror the diets of other low-income households** not on the program. The problem is not the SNAP card; it is the structural barriers of poverty.
- **Erosion of Dignity:** Restrictions undermine the program's foundation of autonomy. They **increase stigma** at the checkout line and treat families with distrust.

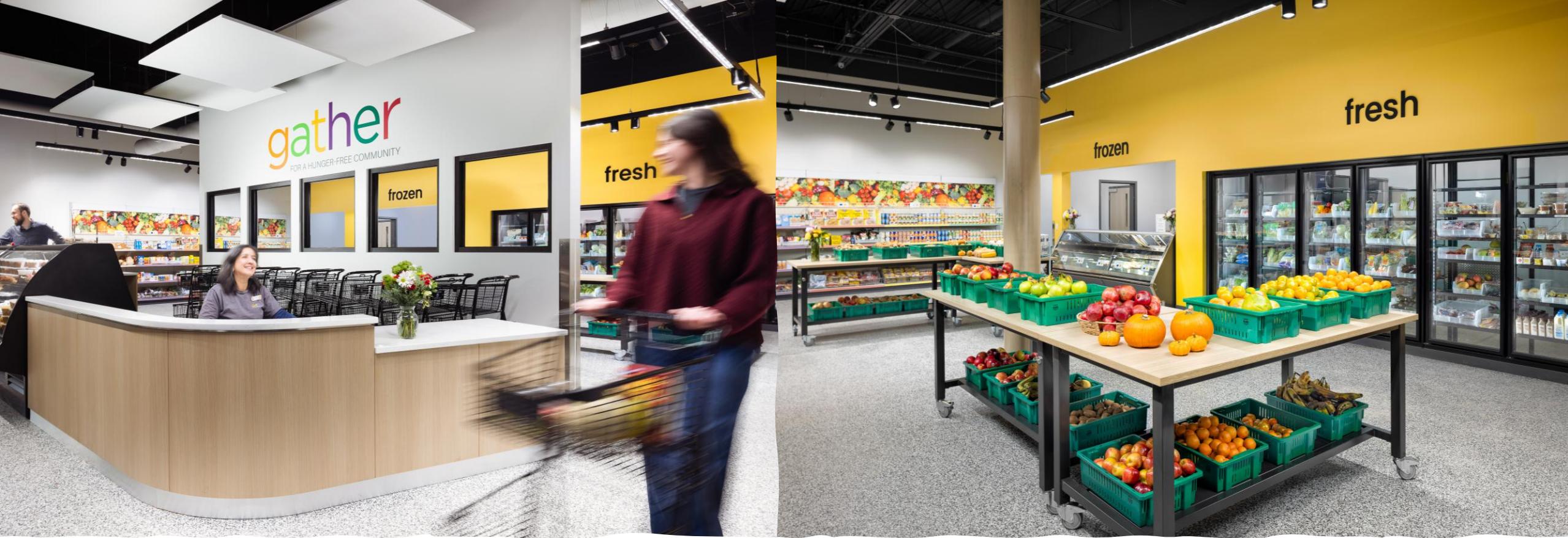
Why do we Oppose SNAP Restrictions?

Huge Costs for State and Retailers

SNAP restrictions add a maze of bureaucracy that burdens families, administrative staff and the state budget.

- These complexities are likely to increase the state's error rate, which will result in huge financial penalties for the state.

Restrictions force retailers to bear expensive costs to change Point of Sale (POS) systems and constantly update their databases. These may force smaller retailers to decide not to accept SNAP at all, and cut vital revenue.



Gather Community Food Center

124 Heritage Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

- Expanded reach, increased efficiency, more resources for the community

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Pantry Market

- People can sign up to become a member
- No income or eligibility requirements (other than being a NH or Maine resident)
- Choice-based access to fresh food and essentials
- Shop once a month at pantry market
- Ready-to-eat meals made by our Cooking 4 Community program available every day
- Served an average of 3 155 people per month in 2025
- 3 293 new member applications this year
- Increased demand with SNAP instability



Mobile Markets, Gus the Bus, and Meals4Kids

- Created in response to transportation barriers to food access
- Travel directly to neighborhoods, schools, and community spaces
- Set up like a farmer's market – produce, protein, dairy, dry goods
- Shop once a week
- 8 Markets in Strafford County- Dover, Somersworth Rochester, Raymond, Farmington
- Served an average 1,645/month individuals a month in Strafford County in 2025
- Printable calendar and locations
gathernh.org



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Cooking4Community

- Turns donated food into ready-to-eat meals
- Designed for people facing barriers to cooking
- Homemade meals available to-go in the pantry lobby
- Can access daily
- Uses all food donations, including items not suited for pantry shelves
- Produced 113,613 meals in 2025



Innovative Programming and Wraparound Supports

- Food helps meet immediate needs
- Support services in one place (SNAP, heating, housing help)
- Partners on-site at pantry
- Fresh Start Culinary Workforce Training
- Demonstration garden for learning and growing
- Education and training to create future opportunities
- Seacoast Food Provider's Network-building collaboration and capacity in the region



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How SNAP Uncertainty Affected Food Access

When SNAP is stable, families are better able to meet their needs; when it is uncertain, emergency food systems are quickly overwhelmed.

Policy decisions that weaken or delay SNAP shift pressure onto the charitable food system

- Federal shutdown concerns and uncertainty around SNAP payments led more households to seek emergency food support, which coincided with opening of new location
- After reopening in our new space, Gather served an average of 125 households per day, peaking at 168 households in late October
- Average daily households served more than doubled compared to our previous site, with peak demand exceeding operational capacity
- A temporary closure and changes to shopping frequency and hours were implemented to stabilize services and support staff and volunteers

