



## ELIMINATE THE VEHICLE ASSET TEST IN SNAP

### BACKGROUND

**The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is our nation's first line of defense against hunger and a means-tested program, meaning that applicants must have income below a certain level to qualify for assistance.** SNAP is a temporary program designed to help families buy groceries during periods of crisis, such as job loss. The average length of time that a household is on SNAP is 8 to 10 months. SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded, and states pay roughly half the cost of administering the program. Eligibility for SNAP is based on household size, income, citizenship status, and other factors.

**Texas also uses a Vehicle Asset Test to determine SNAP eligibility, which is a limit placed on the value of the vehicles that a household may own and still qualify for the program.**

The current limits are \$15,000 for the first vehicle and \$4,650 for the second or any additional vehicles. If a car's value exceeds those limits, the excess value is applied to a liquid asset limit of \$5,000 (e.g., cash in a savings or checking account). If an applicant's total assets exceed this limit, they do not qualify for food assistance.



### PROBLEM

The Vehicle Asset Test prevents many food insecure families from accessing temporary food assistance, for several reasons:

- **It is outdated.** The \$4,650 limit was set in 1973, and the \$15,000 limit on the first vehicle was last updated in 2001.
- **It disproportionately harms two-parent households.** With the second vehicle's limit set so low, this policy disqualifies many two-parent households from accessing SNAP.
- **It jeopardizes people's ability to work.** In Texas, able-bodied adults are required to work 30 hours per week or they can lose their SNAP benefits. But the Vehicle Asset Test prevents people from qualifying for SNAP and owning a reliable vehicle to get to work.

- **It is cumbersome.** State eligibility workers must collect vehicle ownership information from every single applicant and utilize the Kelly Blue Book to make a value determination. This costs the state time and money.

**In addition, the Vehicle Asset Test keeps SNAP from being able to respond effectively to crisis.** When the pandemic hit, many people lost their jobs instantly. But thousands of families were unable to access SNAP because they owned cars above the vehicle asset limits. These families turned to food banks, or other emergency food providers, to fulfill their needs. On average, the 21 food banks in Texas served 400,000 families per week in the first six months of the pandemic, over half of whom sought food assistance for the first time.

## IMPACT ON TEXANS

*Mike, a Central Texan and single parent, uses his truck for freelance construction work. When the pandemic hit, he not only lost income, but his apartment as well. He now lives in his truck with his son, but was denied SNAP due to the value of his vehicle.*

## SOLUTION

**The solution is simple: Texas must eliminate the Vehicle Asset Test in SNAP.** There is no federal requirement for states to have a Vehicle Asset Test, and, in fact, 35 states have abolished it. It is time for Texas to take this next step.



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