

Food Security in Vermont Amid Federal Policy Changes

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H.R. 1: Impact on 3SquaresVT

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed into law **H.R. 1, marking the largest-ever cut to our nation's most effective and dignified federal nutrition program**, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), called 3SquaresVT in our state.

Despite these harmful changes, **3SquaresVT remains our state's most effective and efficient program** to reduce hunger and poverty, particularly in rural, high living cost states like Vermont.

3SquaresVT Supports Nearly 10% of Vermont



3SquaresVT = \$ for groceries every month

- Supports 63,400 people—most are children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Protecting and maximizing participation in 3SquaresVT supports low-income Vermonters, grocers, farmers, and our economy.

People Must Meet Eligibility Requirements

In order to receive 3SquaresVT, **people must apply, meet income and other requirements, complete an interview, and be found eligible** by DCF.

People have to be below certain income limits based on how many people they live with and share food costs with.

For example: a single mother with two kids would be a household of three, and need to earn less than ~\$4,100 a month to qualify. That would be about \$49,000 a year in income.

Benefit Amounts

- Benefit amount is determined based on a calculation between a household's income & expenses
 - *Expenses include rent or mortgage, utilities, childcare, and medical expenses for older or disabled adults*

The average monthly benefit amount for all 39,000 Vermont households participating in 3SquaresVT in September 2025 was \$319, which is about \$79 per week.

SNAP is an essential economic stimulator in Vermont

- Monthly benefits are issued on an **Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card** for most households, which works just like a debit card
- EBT can be used at **600+ retailers in VT** , including 40 farmers markets
- **3SquaresVT keeps more than \$12 million per month in our state economy**
- Every **\$1 in 3SquaresVT generates up to \$1.80** in economic activity

“3SquaresVT is a lifeline.”

Basic needs are called that because they are fundamental to sustaining a person's life.

Too often people have to choose between food for breakfast or putting gas in their car to get to work; between buying needed medication or buying groceries.

3SquaresVT eases the impossible choices so many Vermonters are confronted with each day—between one basic need or another.



H.R.1: Impact on 3SquaresVT

- H.R. 1 made **funding cuts and eligibility changes** to SNAP and Medicaid, in order to fund steep tax breaks to our nation's most wealthy.
- Forcing every state, including Vermont, to **make time consuming and complex changes to our eligibility systems** , and contend with a bigger foot of the bill.
- Forcing low-income people to see **reductions or total losses in their monthly 3SquaresVT benefits** .

H.R.1 Funding Changes to SNAP

Increase to State Cost to Administer 3SquaresVT - October 1, 2026

- Reduces federal reimbursement for administration from 50% to 25%
- Estimated to cost Vermont an additional \$8.4 million annually
- Investing \$8.4 million now will allow Vermont to bring in over \$150 million in federal dollars in the same 12 month period.

Penalty if Payment Error Rate is 6% or more - October 1, 2027

- May trigger 5-15% state contribution to monthly benefits with PER of 6% or more
- Estimated to cost Vermont \$7-\$22 million annually *if we face this penalty*

H.R.1 Program Changes to SNAP

Program changes – Effective October 1, 2025

- Changes to how households report calculate utility costs, resulting in an immediate benefit decrease for **2,600 households**.
- Expanded work requirement (3 month time limit) - impacting up to approx. **4,400 households** including adults 55-65, Veterans, unhoused people, caretakers of kids 14+.
- Restricts 3SquaresVT for many “non-citizen” categories - impacting approx. **119 households**

What this means for Vermont

- Despite federal changes, 3SquaresVT remains our most effective, efficient, and dignified food security program
- Vermont state policymakers can ensure it remains so for the 63,400 people, 600+ retailers, 40 farmers markets, and our state economy as a whole

The state of Vermont can take action:

1. Maximize and leverage federal funding wherever possible

- Fund SNAP Administration
- Strengthen Early Childhood Nutrition Support
- Expand Benefits Navigation and Outreach

2. Provide concrete supports to the most vulnerable groups in VT

- Flexible funding to service providing organizations to be used for purchasing concrete supports for the people they serve

3. Raise revenue