

TO: Vermont House Committee on Human Services
FROM: Vermont Adult Education & Literacy Network
RE: SNAP Benefits for English Language Learners
DATE: Thursday, October 27th

Dear Chair Wood:

The Adult Education & Literacy Network would like to provide some additional information around the issue of SNAP benefits in Vermont, particularly as it relates to our immigrant and refugee populations.

The AELN serves a large number of English Language Learners (“ELL students”) across the State – **we served 818 ELL students in FY25 alone**. Many of these students are low income and access other critical services such as SNAP benefits. In late September, we were informed that our immigrant and refugee students would no longer be able to access their SNAP benefits. This, of course, impacts their ability to live and learn in Vermont.

The Tutorial Center (TTC) is the AEL provider for Bennington county, which currently serves more than 30 ELL students, many of whom are refugees who have arrived in Bennington within the past two years from countries including Venezuela, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Colombia, and Mexico. On October 1st, several of these students experienced a sudden reduction or termination of their SNAP benefits—some after initially being told that their benefits would continue. This has caused confusion and hardship for our refugee student population.

To support these students, TTC created customized lists of nearby food shelves and community meal sites, taking into account where each family lives and their transportation limitations. On days when we hold ELL classes, we also provide transportation to food shelves for the students. We have also begun preparing shared meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which are our busiest classroom days. As always, TTC and other AEL providers are also collaborating with local employment partners, volunteers, and the refugee resettlement center to help families achieve greater stability.

This is, of course, just one small example of the increased demand and undue burden being placed on local community organizations across the State to meet the needs of the people they serve. Federal actions are putting enormous pressure on small-scale organizations to expand services at the local level in order to preserve benefits for our most vulnerable populations, while also cutting federal funding for these local organizations.

The AELN sincerely thanks the Vermont House Committee on Human Services for looking into these critical issues now.