

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 165

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 16, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman PEDRO MEJIA

District 32 (Bergen and Hudson)

Assemblyman VINCENT MAZZEO

District 2 (Atlantic)

Assemblywoman YVONNE LOPEZ

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District 19 (Middlesex)

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Senator THOMAS H. KEAN, JR.

District 21 (Morris, Somerset and Union)

Senator CHRIS A. BROWN

District 2 (Atlantic)

Senator DECLAN J. O'SCANLON, JR.

District 13 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Assemblyman Houghtaling, Assemblywomen Downey, Jasey, McKnight,
Assemblyman Wimberly, Assemblywomen Speight, Chaparro, Dunn and
Senator Stack**

SYNOPSIS

Urges DHS to apply for federal waivers to facilitate and increase access to SNAP benefits during coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/19/2020)

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** urging the Department of Human
2 Services to take certain actions to sustain or increase access to
3 food assistance benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition
4 Assistance Program during the coronavirus disease 2019
5 outbreak.
6
7 **WHEREAS**, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or
8 SNAP, provides critical assistance to supplement the food budget of
9 low-income families nationwide; and
10 **WHEREAS**, SNAP is regulated at the federal level by the United States
11 Department of Agriculture (USDA) pursuant to the “Food and
12 Nutrition Act of 2009,” Pub.L.110-246 (7 U.S.C. s.2011 et seq.),
13 and administered at the State level by the Division of Family
14 Development, within the Department of Human Services, in
15 conjunction with the county welfare agencies; and
16 **WHEREAS**, In December 2019, over 671,000 New Jersey residents
17 relied on SNAP food assistance to supplement their family food
18 budget; and
19 **WHEREAS**, As of March 13, 2020, New Jersey health officials had
20 confirmed 29 cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in 10
21 counties; and
22 **WHEREAS**, In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Murphy
23 issued a State of Emergency and Public Health Emergency on
24 March 9, 2020, authorizing all executive branch departments to
25 utilize State resources to help communities and individuals respond
26 to, and recover from, COVID-19 infection; and
27 **WHEREAS**, Approximately 226 New Jersey school districts have
28 closed in response to COVID-19, depriving thousands of food-
29 insecure students of access to the nutritious meals they usually
30 receive at school; and
31 **WHEREAS**, Because many New Jersey colleges and universities have
32 closed in response to the outbreak, many food-insecure students
33 have lost access to their financial aid, which often covers the cost of
34 an on-campus meal plan; and
35 **WHEREAS**, As New Jersey businesses temporarily close, stop
36 operation, or require employees to work remotely in order to stem
37 the spread of COVID-19, many minimum-wage employees may
38 face job loss, reduced work hours, and potential income loss; and
39 **WHEREAS**, The USDA is authorized, during a public health
40 emergency, to grant state waivers from certain SNAP requirements,
41 such as allowing states to streamline program administration,
42 extend beneficiary certification periods, and permit online benefits
43 enrollment; and
44 **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey Department of Human Services requested
45 a waiver from the USDA on March 11, 2020, that would allow the
46 State to issue a supplemental SNAP payment equal to a half-month
47 of benefits to allow recipients to stock up on a two-week supply of

1 food to allow them to stay in their homes and help prevent the
2 spread of COVID-19; now, therefore,

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4 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
5 *Jersey (the Senate concurring):*

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7 1. The Legislature strongly urges the Department of Human
8 Services to apply for any available federal waivers, pursuant to the
9 Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency and Public Health
10 Emergency, or any Presidential disaster declaration, to facilitate
11 beneficiary access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
12 (SNAP) benefits and to ease any administrative barriers to
13 accessing SNAP benefits.

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15 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
16 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the
17 Secretary of the Senate to Governor Murphy, the Commissioner of
18 Human Services, and the Director of the Division of Family
19 Development.

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STATEMENT

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24 This concurrent resolution strongly urges the Department of
25 Human Services (DHS) to apply for any federal waivers available to
26 increase and extend access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
27 Program (SNAP) benefits, and ease any administrative barriers to
28 accessing benefits that arise from the nationwide outbreak of the
29 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

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31 Many New Jersey school districts, colleges and universities, and
32 businesses have closed their facilities, encouraging students and
33 employees to study and work remotely, as part of the State's effort
34 to stem the spread of COVID-19. As a result, many hourly-wage
35 earners are experiencing a sudden reduction in their weekly income,
36 affecting their ability to purchase a sufficient quantity of nutritious
37 food for their families. For some of these individuals, the amount
38 of their monthly SNAP benefit, which is based on the family's
39 income, may be insufficient as they experience a reduction in their
40 employment hours. Additionally, with many schools, colleges and
41 universities closing in an effort to stem the spread of COVID-19,
42 food-insecure students are losing access to the nutritious meals they
usually receive at school.

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44 The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which
45 administers SNAP, has multiple tools at its disposal to help states
46 address food insecurity during a public health emergency, such as
47 the COVID-19 outbreak. The USDA is authorized to grant state
48 waivers from certain SNAP program requirements, allowing states
to streamline program administration, extend beneficiary

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1 certification periods, and permit online benefits enrollment.
2 Although the DHS has already applied for one such waiver, which
3 would allow a supplemental SNAP payment equal to one half-
4 month of benefits to allow beneficiaries to purchase a two-week
5 supply of food to allow them to stay in their home and help prevent
6 the spread of COVID-19, it is the sponsor's intent to urge the DHS
7 to apply for any additional waivers as may be available, in order to
8 provide expedited food assistance benefits to the New Jersey
9 families whose incomes are reduced during the COVID-19
10 outbreak.