

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 130

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 20, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Urges United States Department of Agriculture to authorize permanent use of SNAP benefits for online purchasing of foods.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging the United States Department of
2 Agriculture to authorize permanently the use of Supplemental
3 Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for the online purchasing
4 of foods.
5
6 **WHEREAS**, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP,
7 provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of low-
8 income families in order to purchase healthy food and move towards
9 self-sufficiency; and
10 **WHEREAS**, This nationwide program is federally regulated by the
11 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) pursuant to the
12 “Food and Nutrition Act of 2008,” Pub.L.110-246 (7 U.S.C. s.2011
13 et seq.); and
14 **WHEREAS**, The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that the USDA conduct a
15 pilot program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail
16 food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. In
17 April 2019, New York became the first State to launch the pilot
18 program; and
19 **WHEREAS**, The USDA opened its pilot program for online grocery
20 purchasing to New Jersey’s SNAP participants, following the
21 department’s expedited efforts to introduce states into the pilot with
22 the onset of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis,
23 in March 2020; and
24 **WHEREAS**, Currently, individuals participating in New Jersey SNAP
25 may purchase groceries online through Amazon, and at participating
26 Walmart, The Fresh Grocers, and ShopRite stores; and
27 **WHEREAS**, According to the USDA, this pilot program is a two-year
28 initiative, as such it is slated to expire in April of 2021; and
29 **WHEREAS**, Enabling SNAP recipients to purchase foods online allows
30 them to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention social
31 distancing guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID-19; and
32 **WHEREAS**, Despite advances in COVID-19 vaccinations, precautions
33 to the virus such as social distancing are likely to be encouraged
34 beyond the expiration of the SNAP online purchasing pilot program;
35 and
36 **WHEREAS**, Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, online purchasing of
37 food also supports those SNAP recipients who may be challenged
38 with transportation or mobility issues, ensuring that such individuals
39 continue to have access to healthy and nutritious foods; and
40 **WHEREAS**, The online purchasing of food has become a widespread
41 practice among general consumers, and it is appropriate for the same
42 service to be made available to SNAP recipients; and
43 **WHEREAS**, Purchasing groceries online is critical to providing safe and
44 vital access to healthy food for low-income households and is
45 necessary on a permanent basis to ensure an equity for SNAP
46 recipients; now, therefore,
47
48 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

1 1. The Senate of the State of New Jersey urges the United States
2 Department of Agriculture to take immediate action to authorize
3 permanently the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
4 benefits for online purchasing of foods.

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6 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
7 shall be transmitted by the secretary of the Senate to the United States
8 Secretary of Agriculture and every member of the United States
9 Congress elected from this State.

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STATEMENT

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14 This bill urges the United States Department of Agriculture to
15 authorize the permanent use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
16 Program (SNAP) benefits for the online purchasing of foods. The
17 SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of
18 low-income families in order to purchase healthy food and move
19 towards self-sufficiency and is federally regulated by the United
20 States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The General Assembly
21 deems that purchasing groceries online is critical to providing safe
22 and vital access to healthy food for low-income households and is
23 necessary on a permanent basis to ensure equity for SNAP recipients.

24 The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that the USDA conduct a pilot
25 program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail food
26 stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. In April
27 2019, New York became the first State to launch the pilot program.
28 The USDA opened its pilot program for online grocery purchasing to
29 New Jersey's SNAP participants, following the department's
30 expedited efforts to introduce states into the pilot with the onset of
31 the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis, in March of
32 2020. Individuals participating in New Jersey SNAP may purchase
33 groceries online through Amazon, and at participating Walmart, The
34 Fresh Grocers, and ShopRite stores. According to the USDA, this
35 pilot program is a two-year initiative; as such, it is slated to expire in
36 April of 2021.

37 Enabling SNAP recipients to purchase foods online has allowed
38 them to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention social
39 distancing guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Despite
40 advances in COVID-19 vaccinations, precautions to the virus such as
41 social distancing are likely to be encouraged beyond the expiration
42 of the SNAP online purchasing pilot program.

43 Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, online purchasing of food
44 also supports those SNAP recipients who may be challenged with
45 transportation or mobility issues, ensuring that such individuals
46 continue to have access to healthy and nutritious foods. Furthermore,
47 the online purchasing of food has become a widespread practice
48 among general consumers, and it is appropriate for the same service
49 to be made available to SNAP recipients.