

April 2026

# Protecting SNAP Access in NC

Why the state should fully cover counties' SNAP administrative costs

[Nearly 1.3 million](#) North Carolinians rely on SNAP each month to afford groceries. Counties play a critical role in delivering these benefits on time — by processing applications, verifying documentation, determining eligibility, and calculating monthly benefit amounts.

To carry out these responsibilities, counties need adequate funding to hire and train staff and maintain the systems required to process cases efficiently. Otherwise, counties may lack the capacity to process applications and recertifications on time, risking delays, gaps, or even [denials of food assistance](#) for families who are eligible. Even brief disruptions to SNAP can force households to choose between food and other basic needs.

The harmful federal megabill, or H.R. 1, threatens this capacity by shifting a larger share of administrative costs onto counties. Historically, the federal government has [covered 50 percent](#) of SNAP administrative costs, while states and local governments cover the other half. In NC, however, counties currently bear the [full non-federal share](#). Beginning Oct. 1, H.R. 1 will further shift these costs by increasing the county share to 75 percent.

**In the first year alone, counties collectively could face \$191 million in total SNAP administrative costs**, which includes an estimated \$69 million in new costs. Unless the state steps in to fully cover the county share, counties may struggle to build the capacity needed to ensure reliable access to food assistance across the state.

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## H.R. 1 makes SNAP administration more costly and complex

H.R.1 is setting counties up to fail. Counties are being asked to administer a more complex program with less federal funding, while also being expected to reduce error rates to avoid new financial penalties.

- **H.R. 1 expands work reporting requirements to new groups**, including older adults, parents with children ages 14+, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth, and [adds new verification steps](#) during recertification. This significantly increases the paperwork and cases counties must review and monitor.
- **H.R. 1 requires states to pay a share of SNAP benefits** when [administrative payment errors](#) exceed federal thresholds, starting October 2027. This means mistakes in processing cases could trigger new costs for the state, [increasing pressure on counties](#) to implement new and more complex rules without error.

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## Counties are already facing strained budgets and rising costs

Many counties are already facing tight budgets, rising operating costs, and staffing shortages. Requiring counties to cover a larger share of SNAP administrative costs will likely force difficult tradeoffs between administering food assistance and maintaining other essential local services — at a time when residents rely on these services to get by.

- **The 75 percent SNAP cost-share takes up a large share of some local budgets.** In Halifax County, SNAP administrative costs alone could reach \$8.4 million in the coming fiscal year, more than 10 percent of the county's current general fund budget.
- **Some counties are already considering cuts to other services.** With one-fifth of its residents relying on SNAP, Bladen County is [considering delaying infrastructure upgrades](#) and weighing service cuts to sustain the program amid rising administrative costs.

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## Shifting SNAP admin costs to counties will create unequal access to benefits

Access to food assistance should not depend on where someone lives. If counties are left responsible for covering these administrative costs, families' ability to receive benefits on time will depend on the capacity of their county to administer SNAP.

- **Some counties may be able to prepare.** Union County is already [retraining staff](#), educating participants about upcoming changes, and requesting additional staff to manage the increased workload.
- **Many counties do not have that flexibility.** Counties already struggle to [recruit and retain social service workers](#) while meeting SNAP's quality control and timeliness requirements. Rep. Larry Potts (R-Lexington) noted that smaller counties often face more barriers to attracting workers, such as long commutes and limited budgets.

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## NC can fully fund SNAP admin costs to protect access to food assistance

It would cost the state about \$191 million in fiscal year 2027 to cover every county's share of SNAP administrative costs and ensure counties can deliver benefits on time. This cost is a drop in the bucket compared to the more than [\\$13 billion in annual revenue](#) that the state is projected to lose by 2031 when the latest round of state tax cuts is fully implemented, dropping the personal income tax rate to 2.49 percent and eliminating the corporate income tax.

Cutting taxes for the wealthy will not eliminate the need for food assistance. It will simply reduce the state's ability to fund it and shift the cost onto counties and residents instead. By fully funding SNAP administrative costs, the state can prevent federal cost shifts from weakening the program and ensure families across NC can count on SNAP to put food on the table.