



March 18, 2021

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families opposes House Bill 1512, which would limit the state's ability to extend SNAP benefits to families who are having trouble meeting work requirements.

The bill's aim is to promote work and move families up the economic ladder, which of course we want. **Our SNAP program already has mandatory employment and training requirements, and we don't allow the state to waive those requirements, even in areas that may have higher unemployment.** We already have strict rules in the program.

HB 1512 goes a step further though, and wouldn't allow the state to grant individual exemptions when caseworkers deem that it's necessary. A few things to note:

- **Arkansas uses these discretionary exemptions very sparingly, but they're good to have for unusual circumstances.**
- We're still struggling through a pandemic. People's lives are complicated. They're caring for sick loved ones, and jobs are not as plentiful. There are reasons people can't work right now. This is not the time to take away agency discretion.
- It doesn't cost the state anything to use this discretion.
- Prohibiting exemptions even in special circumstances, like when someone is going through substance abuse treatment, is short-sighted. We want people to succeed, and we need to recognize that some will have temporary bumps in the road to success.
- There's no evidence that these discretionary exemptions are being abused.
- This will likely cause the SNAP "error rate" in Arkansas to go up.

HB 1512 has the potential to keep nutritious food from families who need it most, and because of that Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families oppose this bill.