



*City of Alexandria, Virginia*  
*301 King Street, Suite 2300*  
*Alexandria, Virginia 22314*



Alyia Gaskins  
Mayor

Office: 703.746.4500  
alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov

August 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1119 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Beyer:

On behalf of the residents of the City of Alexandria, I write with urgency to request your assistance in asking the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a comprehensive review of the root causes of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) error rate and its readiness to meet new federal requirements enacted in the One Big Beautiful Bill (P.L. 119-21).

**Local Impact in Alexandria**

More than 14,000 Alexandrians currently rely on SNAP benefits to help put food on their tables. This includes 8,076 children under the age of 18 and 1,795 seniors—populations particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. For many of these families, SNAP is the difference between a secure meal and going hungry. If benefits are disrupted, the City alone cannot absorb the impact. We continue to work closely with community partners, non-profit organizations, faith-based institutions, and state agencies to assess and mitigate harm, but the stakes for our residents are too high to ignore.

**Federal Context and Risk to Virginia**

The so-called One Big Beautiful Bill introduced a new "payback provision" for SNAP that will take effect in late 2027. Under this provision, any state with a SNAP payment error rate above 6% at the trigger date will be required to shoulder a substantially larger share of its SNAP program costs. This provision does not embrace cost sharing. Instead, it represents just part of the largest unfunded mandate the federal government has ever placed on state and local governments.

Virginia's most recent data show an FY24 SNAP error rate of 11.5%, nearly double the forthcoming federal threshold. If the Commonwealth cannot reduce its error rate by late 2027, it could face penalties estimated at \$270 million in lost benefits, or roughly 15% of Virginia's total SNAP budget.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), SNAP plays a critical role in Virginia’s economy and household stability: more than 725,000 Virginians—about 1 in 12 residents—participate in SNAP, with 69% of those households including children, seniors, or people with disabilities. Nearly 75% of SNAP benefits go to families with children, and the average SNAP benefit in Virginia is approximately \$176 per person per month, helping to drive over \$1.1 billion in federal resources into local economies annually. These data underscore how deeply SNAP reaches into Virginia households and the urgency of improving program accuracy before federal penalties take effect.

CBPP data also show that SNAP is a cornerstone of household stability and economic activity across the nation. Over 41 million people in the United States—roughly 1 in 8 residents—receive SNAP benefits, and about 86% of all SNAP benefits go to households that include a child, senior, or person with a disability.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, nearly two-thirds of all SNAP participants are in families with children, and the average monthly SNAP benefit is approximately \$230 per person, providing a vital food lifeline while injecting more than \$100 billion in federal resources each year into state and local economies.<sup>2</sup> These national figures highlight how critical SNAP is to the well-being of millions of households and underscore the urgency of ensuring program integrity and accuracy as new federal requirements take effect.

### **Need for a GAO Examination**

Given these risks, I respectfully urge you to request that GAO:

1. Examine and determine the root causes of Virginia’s elevated SNAP payment error rate.
2. Evaluate the operational, technological, and administrative factors driving errors—including outdated information technology systems to administer the program, training gaps, inconsistent federal guidance, poor data-sharing techniques, a lack of resources, or other factors.
3. Assess how prepared Virginia is to meet the new 6% error-rate threshold before the 2027 trigger date.
4. Identify best practices in other states that have successfully reduced error rates while maintaining essential access for eligible beneficiaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* (Updated 2024): [www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap); USDA Food and Nutrition Service, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2022* (Jan. 2024): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/characteristics-snap-households-fy-2022>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; USDA Food and Nutrition Service, *SNAP Data Tables: National Level Annual Summary* (2024): [www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap](https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap); Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *SNAP Fact Sheet* (2024): <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

5. Recommend targeted investments in IT infrastructure, staffing, and oversight to ensure Virginia does not forfeit critical federal nutrition dollars and does not inadvertently push qualified families and seniors into deeper food insecurity.

The residents of Alexandria cannot bear the brunt of federal penalties tied to systemic challenges beyond their control. A GAO review would provide invaluable insight to the Commonwealth, the General Assembly, and Virginia's localities as we all work together to ensure SNAP operates accurately and equitably. It would also give Congress a clear view into what support or adjustments may be needed to help states meet the new federal mandates without destabilizing access to food for vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for your steadfast advocacy on behalf of Alexandrians to help meet their basic needs. Please do not hesitate to reach out to City of Alexandria Legislative Director Wendy Ginsberg ([wendy.ginsberg@alexandriava.gov](mailto:wendy.ginsberg@alexandriava.gov)) for any additional data, impact stories, or further information as you consider this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyia Gaskins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alyia" and last name "Gaskins" clearly distinguishable.

Alyia Gaskins  
Mayor  
City of Alexandria  
Cell: 703-244-3312  
[Alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov)