
HF 3855/SF 4135 – Allowing Certain SNAP Recipients to Use Benefits to Purchase Prepared Hot Foods

What Does This Bill Do?

HF 3855/SF 4135 directs DHS to participate in the Restaurant Meals Program through the USDA.

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is a state option to allow certain SNAP clients, who might not be able to prepare meals for themselves or who do not have permanent housing for storing and preparing food, to be able to buy prepared meals with their SNAP benefits.

This legislation limits the use of SNAP benefits for this purpose in Minnesota to existing EBT providers such as grocery stores.

To be eligible for the program, SNAP clients must be certified for SNAP and **all** members of the household must be either:

- Elderly (60 years of age or older);
- Disabled (receives disability or blindness payments or receives disability retirement benefits from a governmental agency because of a disability considered permanent);
- Homeless; OR
- A spouse of a SNAP client who is eligible for the program.

Why is this important?

People who are unstably housed may not have access to a kitchen to cook or the ability to heat up food. Elderly or disabled individuals may have a difficult time preparing foods. This program allows greater flexibility for recipient. This change would encourage more to apply for SNAP. MN is one of the lowest SNAP uptake rates by those who qualify.

- In 2022 over 17,000 SNAP recipients in Ramsey County were over the age of 55 (approximately 20% of overall SNAP participants).ⁱ As the population ages, these rates are expected to increase as adults over 65 are the fastest-growing age group of Ramsey County residents.
- Across Minnesota, 33% of SNAP participants are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities.ⁱⁱ
- In 2023's Point-In-Time Count, 1,680 homeless individuals were identified in Ramsey County. 177 were youth and 107 were Veterans. Nearly 50% were Black, 10% were multiple races, 10% were Hispanic (all races), 6% were Native American, 5% Asian and 30% were white.

ⁱ Ramsey County Open Data Portal

ⁱⁱ MN Hunger Initiative Data