



Military Family Nutrition Access Act (S.497)

Problem:

Servicemembers commit their lives to defend our country – they should not struggle to feed their families. A 2020 survey revealed active duty enlisted families experienced low food security at a rate of 1.5 times the national average. Moreover, in July 2022, the Department of Defense released an updated report on military hunger which found that 24 percent of all active duty servicemembers (approx. 286,000 individuals) experienced some level of food insecurity in 2020 and 2021, with junior enlisted facing the highest risk.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s primary program for addressing food insecurity, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), excludes many vulnerable military families due to a flawed income eligibility formula that penalizes servicemembers who receive a housing allowance.

In addition to base pay, many servicemembers receive this allowance, called Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), to offset the cost of off-base or privatized military housing. BAH is not intended to serve as a supplemental income and, in fact, is not treated as income by the IRS or when determining eligibility for numerous other federal assistance programs, like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Solution:

The Military Family Nutrition Access Act modifies Section 5(d) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to exclude BAH from SNAP eligibility calculations, bringing it in line with other federal assistance programs and allowing all eligible military families to access the resources they need.

Supporters:

Veterans of Foreign Wars
American Legion
National Military Family Association
Military Officers Association of America
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Alliance to End Hunger
Air Force Sergeants Association
Association of the United States Navy
Fleet Reserve Association
National Association of Counties

Bread for the World
Food Research & Action Center
Feeding America
Military Family Advisory Network
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
MomsRising
Share Our Strength
VoteVets
United Soldiers and Sailors of America
Center for Science in the Public Interest