



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

March 18, 2025

Dear State, Tribal, Territorial, and Local Government Partners:

Federal law requires that when a sponsored alien receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, the alien's sponsor must reimburse the cost of those benefits. Moreover, immigration law requires that the sponsor's income and resources are deemed part of the alien's income and resources when determining SNAP eligibility until that alien becomes a United States Citizen or earns or is credited with 40 qualifying quarters under title II of the Social Security Act. President Trump made it clear in his Executive Order, "Ending Taxpayer Subsidization of Open Borders," the United States will uphold the national policy articulated in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) that "aliens within the Nation's borders not depend on public resources to meet their needs."

As you are aware, a sponsor enters a binding contract with the United States by signing an Affidavit of Support Under Section 213A of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In exchange for granting an intending immigrant the privilege of becoming a lawful permanent resident, the sponsor is obligated to provide sufficient support for the immigrant. Specifically, the sponsor is informed that if an alien they sponsor is provided certain public benefits, including SNAP, the sponsor is personally responsible to reimburse the cost. While more information is needed to ensure strict enforcement of sponsor deeming and recoupment there is strong reason to believe States are not fully deeming and recouping funds that go to sponsored aliens. USDA expects every State agency to deem the financial resources available to the sponsor when determining whether the intending immigrant is eligible for SNAP to the fullest extent of law and to seek reimbursement from sponsors. To be clear, regardless of rules in other programs, when it comes to SNAP eligibility determinations, States must deem the sponsor's financial income and resources as available to the sponsored alien until the period of responsibility ends. That has been the law under PRWORA since 1996 and its deeming provision must be fully enforced.

Lax enforcement of a sponsor's responsibility encourages sponsors to abandon their own responsibility to care for the alien, instead relying on American taxpayers to pay the bill. When a sponsor commits to support an intending immigrant in exchange for lawful permanent resident status in the United States, the commitment must be kept, and Federal and State agencies play a crucial role in ensuring that commitment is taken seriously. Failure to keep this promise to financially support another person and thereby pass the obligation to American taxpayers will no longer be tolerated where SNAP benefits are concerned. USDA will take necessary measures to ensure appropriate and strict enforcement of the legal responsibility of sponsors.

To that end, I recently directed FNS to complete a thorough review of State and Federal enforcement of sponsorship requirements and to report its findings and recommendations to me. At the end of my review, FNS will provide further guidance to States on improving procedures

to fully implement legal requirements for reimbursement for the cost of SNAP benefits provided to aliens and deeming the financial resources of sponsors to fully comply with existing law.

Sincerely,

John Walk
Acting Deputy Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture