

House Committee on Human Services

March 21, 2023

HB 1287: Relating to annually adjusting for inflation the maximum amount of a motor vehicle excluded in determining eligibility for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

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Chair Frank and members of the House Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today on House Bill 1287 by Representative Guillen concerning the modernization of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) vehicle asset test in Texas. Updating the SNAP vehicle asset test will ensure low-income families have access to food assistance vital to their health and well-being. We respectfully offer the following for the Committee's consideration:

- **Update the Outdated SNAP Vehicle Asset Test:** Texas' current SNAP eligibility asset criteria places income limits of \$5,000 in countable cash, restricts the value of the first vehicle to \$15,000 (last updated in 2001), and any additional cars to \$4,650 (last updated in 1973). These outdated limits have never been indexed for inflation to reflect the actual cost of necessary and dependable transportation. Updating the vehicle asset limits to account for inflation and the rising cost of vehicles will ensure that more families can access SNAP benefits without sacrificing their ability to work.
- **Reduce Barriers for Two-Parent and Multigenerational Households:** The current vehicle asset test disproportionately impacts two-parent and multigenerational households, as the extremely low limit on a family's second vehicle can disqualify them from receiving SNAP benefits. Modernizing the vehicle asset test will help address this disparity and ensure that more families in need can access food assistance.
- **Promote Economic Stability and Reliable Transportation:** To maintain eligibility for SNAP, able-bodied adults are required to work at least 30 hours per week. This requirement places a significant importance on having reliable transportation to maintain steady employment. The low vehicle asset test limits prevent people from qualifying for SNAP while also owning a reliable vehicle, thereby jeopardizing their ability to work and maintain economic stability.
- **Address Effects of Inflation and its Regional Impact:** The number of households denied SNAP due to the vehicle asset test has increased dramatically in recent years due to inflation and supply chain challenges. The rise in inflation has caused many families to lose their SNAP benefits during recertification, as their cars' values have increased and exceeded the outdated limits. In 2019, 11,615 households were denied SNAP due to the vehicle asset test, while in 2022, this number grew to 54,740, nearly five times as many denials despite little change in the total number of SNAP participants. The growth in SNAP

denials is also evident across Texas regions. For example, in the Rio Grande Valley (Hidalgo, Willacy, Cameron and Starr counties), the number of households denied SNAP due to the Vehicle Asset Test grew from 1,076 in 2019 to 4,753 in 2022. Table 1 shows this alarming trend in key areas of the state and underscores the urgent need to modernize the vehicle asset test to better serve families in need.

Table 1. Households Denied SNAP due to Vehicle Asset Test in 2019 and 2022.

Member	Counties Represented	2019 Denials	2022 Denials	Increase in Denials
Rep. Frank (District 69)	Archer, Baylor, Clay, Cottle, Fisher, Foard, Hardeman, Haskell, King, Knox, Motley, Stonewall, Wichita, Wilbarger	56	325	↑ 269
Rep. Ramos (District 102) Rep. Rose (District 110)	Dallas	885	4,212	↑ 3,327
Rep. Campos (District 119)	Bexar	719	4,040	↑ 3,321
Rep. Hull (District 138)	Harris	1,969	9,568	↑ 7,599
Rep. Klick (District 91)	Tarrant	761	3,651	↑ 2,890
Rep. Manuel (District 22)	Jefferson	134	587	↑ 453
Rep. Shaheen (District 66) Rep. Noble (District 89)	Collin	209	990	↑ 781
Texas	All counties	11,615	54,740	↑ 43,125

RECOMMENDATION:

Texas should modernize or eliminate the vehicle asset tests for SNAP, ensuring that a greater number of families can access food assistance while preserving their ability to work and support their loved ones. Updating the SNAP Vehicle Asset Test with an inflationary adjustment, as outlined in HB 1287, will more accurately represent current car values, and enable families to maintain access to food assistance despite economic challenges. The passage of HB 1287 will enhance the SNAP program's accessibility, promote economic stability, and support the well-being of families across Texas.

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