

**Performance Oversight Testimony – Department of Human Services
February 26, 2026
Testimony of Maggie Snow
Anti-Hunger Program Associate – SNAP, D.C. Hunger Solutions**

Good morning, Chairperson Frumin and Committee Members. Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Maggie Snow. I'm the Anti-Hunger Program Associate, SNAP, at D.C. Hunger Solutions. We are an initiative of the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) founded in 2002 striving to end hunger in the nation's capital by improving the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income District residents. In FY25, our organization prescreened over 1,300 residents and helped over 700 apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. We are grateful to work closely with DHS Economic Security Administration (ESA) and thank Brian Campbell, Tara Comstock-Green, Angela Hemsley, Danielle Oliver, and Nakia Taylor for their support. As the SNAP program faces the greatest cuts in its history following the passage of H.R. 1, D.C. must ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect program access and integrity.

I want to acknowledge the ways the agency has made improvements in the past year to strengthen access. In October 2025, DHS introduced the "Ask the Director" portal, which allows residents, family members, and advocates to submit escalations directly to the agency. Overall, the portal has significantly improved our workflow, ensuring we receive responses much more quickly. With the previous spreadsheet system, we often waited longer than a month to receive a response, and we now receive responses within three to five business days. However, we often must submit two to three tickets to get an issue fully resolved. Of the seventy-six tickets D.C. Hunger Solutions has submitted since October 2025, twenty have required at least one additional ticket. Additional tickets are sometimes marked as duplicates and closed, which creates additional work for us, as well as the DHS staff who review them. We're hopeful that the agency will continue to improve the system over the next year.

For many of our clients, access to an ESA service center is critical whether submitting an application or addressing SNAP case concerns with a case worker in person. We are thrilled that ESA service centers will begin using a new ticket system to ensure clients have a concrete way to document when they speak to the service center front desk or conduct an in-person interview. The receipts will include the names of specific verifications submitted. We



are thrilled about this and hope it will reduce the number of times clients have to resubmit paperwork online because their paper document was lost at the service center. We urge the agency to introduce a similar receipt system for the drop box so that paperwork does not get lost.

Another major strength is the response of the Division of Innovation & Change Management (DICM) team, specifically Tara Comstock-Green, Purna Lingareddy, and Bhargav Reddy. Whether they are responding to minor tech glitches or larger concerns, the DICM team continues to respond in an efficient and client-centered way. For example, in late December, we noticed that the District Direct portal no longer gave the option to create an account without an email. We immediately wrote to Tara and team, explaining that this presented a major barrier to clients, and the following week, the issue was resolved. We're so grateful for their rapid response in executing a solution to improve access to District Direct.

There continues to be room for growth in three major areas: language access, client-friendly notices, and accurate and timely case processing. In terms of language access, when clients contact the ESA call center, they select the number that corresponds to their preferred language. When clients press one for English, they hear a helpful message that reminds them of the interview requirement for SNAP applicants and explains how they can check their case status online using District Direct. When clients select a language other than English, they do not hear the same helpful reminder. While we have noticed a greater number of calls being conducted with social service representatives (SSRs) who speak Spanish, when SSRs need to add a Language Line interpreter, clients are greeted in English before abruptly being placed on hold. We have asked the call center to consider adding the interpreter before connecting to the client, so that the client is greeted in their first language. I hear from clients multiple times per week that they often wait 40 minutes or longer for their call to be answered, only for the call to drop once the interpreter is connected.

Additionally, in one particularly negative call in December 2025, between me, an ESA call center representative, and a Spanish-speaking client, the call center representative said that she would need to add a Language Line interpreter to get consent from the client to share information. The interpreter asked the client to spell her name and I had to jump in because the interpreter gave an incorrect spelling. The call center representative told me that I wasn't allowed to speak. I reiterated that I was jumping in because the interpreter translated

something incorrectly. Later, I asked if the representative could ask the client for consent to share information with me, so that I could help because the client was having trouble answering her questions. The representative again refused and said she couldn't ask the client for consent "while she was in the middle of verifying." She continued the call without asking for client consent for me to participate. Ultimately, I had to provide a date in Spanish to the client because I knew I couldn't say it otherwise. This is the first time a representative has refused to ask for client consent to allow me to assist. This made the call incredibly difficult and uncomfortable. We do our best to help clients navigate the online application and call system, but it's really hard to do so if we have to remain silent on calls. When I raised this issue with DHS ESA leadership, they apologized for the incident and reiterated that this was not a typical call experience.

We urge the agency to strengthen language access by streamlining the process for securing interpreters and coordinating effectively with organizational advocates. We also encourage improvements to the formatting and translation of notices to ensure clients fully understand agency requests and are able to respond accurately and timely.

In July, Congress passed H.R. 1, which made the greatest cuts to SNAP in the program's history. Clear, client-friendly communication is critical so that clients know what to expect. While D.C. DHS has not yet released guidance on this, we know that in the future, asylees and refugees will not be eligible for SNAP. For the first time in over twenty years, SNAP clients in D.C. will also be subject to time limits based on work or volunteering status. Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) will be subject to time limits and required meet work requirements by working a traditional paid job, volunteering, or participating in SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program to continue receiving SNAP benefits for longer than three months in a 36-month period.

In December 2025, DHS began sending mailed notices and robocalling clients to let them know of this requirement. Notices were sent to all households, regardless of client age, disability, or eligibility status. Many households who do NOT need to meet the work requirements received the notice in error. For example, residents over the age of 64, those with dependent children under 14 years old, residents receiving Social Security disability, and parents in mixed-status households who are not eligible for SNAP and only receive benefits for their eligible children, all received the notice. In these cases, the notice caused unnecessary

confusion and panic, which could have been easily avoided had the agency sent the notice only to affected clients or included more clear language around exemptions. The information on the DHS website is also confusing, even for advocates. While we understand the agency's intent to notify clients as soon as possible, we wish there had been greater collaboration with advocates on how to effectively communicate and share information with SNAP clients.

Since the initial notice, DHS met with advocates and incorporated some of our feedback into their development of client-facing materials. While we appreciate this collaboration, we still have many questions about the rollout of work requirements, including:

- What is the official implementation date?
- Will existing SNAP clients be screened for eligibility at their next recertification date?
- Will DHS release a standardized form for medical providers to document when a client has a physical or mental health condition that limits their ability to work?
- How will DHS clearly communicate the requirements to clients who also receive Medicaid and TANF?

We know the agency has a lot on its plate, but swift answers to these questions will allow advocates to respond as quickly as possible to reassure clients who rely on SNAP to feed themselves and their families.

D.C. continues to show a high case and procedural error rate (CAPER), poor timeliness, and payment error rate (PER). These rates mean that the agency is not performing well in terms of appropriate denial or suspension, case processing timeliness, or payment accuracy. Below is our recent data:

- Case and procedural error (CAPER) in FY24: [58.69%](#), meaning 58.69% of cases saw inaccurate denial, termination, or suspension
- Timeliness in FY23: [48.13%](#), meaning only 48.13% of applications being processed in a timely manner, meaning over half of all SNAP applicants in D.C. had to wait longer than the guaranteed 30 days for regular cases or seven days for expedited cases. We have the lowest ranking of all states and territories.
- Payment error rate in FY24: [13.62%](#) of cases had an overpayment, 3.76% had underpayments

While these rates are alarming, we are particularly concerned about the consistently high PERs. Overpayments and underpayments both cause real harm to SNAP participants. When households receive too little in benefits, they are forced to stretch already inadequate resources, often skipping meals or relying on emergency food providers to fill the gap. Conversely, overpayments can lead to recoupment actions that reduce future benefits, creating unexpected financial instability and confusion for families who are already living on the margins. I recently helped a client who reported that they abruptly stopped receiving SNAP benefits at the end of September 2025. The client is a parent in a six-person household that receives over \$700 per month in benefits. Due to agency error, the client missed out on 3.5 months of payments. With advocacy from D.C. Hunger Solutions and Legal Aid, the client received a back payment of nearly \$3,000 in late January 2026. The client was struggling to feed their family for over 3 months and the agency did not explain what caused the error.

The high payment error rate will also have implications for D.C.'s budget. Under [H.R.1](#), states will, for the first time, have to pay a portion of the SNAP benefit cost. The specific percentage of the cost share will be tied to the state's payment error rate. Given D.C.'s high error rate, DHS will be responsible for paying 15 percent of the benefit cost. On top of this, in FY27 (October 1, 2026), states will take on an additional 25 percent of the administrative cost to operate SNAP. The administrative and benefit cost shift [will harm states](#) and ultimately, clients.

We urge the Committee to work with DHS and the advocate community on creative solutions to lower the payment error rate. We know that the changes to humanitarian eligibility and work requirements will require the agency to process more paperwork. More frequent checkpoints and paperwork exchanges increase the chance of error because case data is being manipulated more frequently. Now, more than ever, the agency has to do everything it can to streamline processes. D.C. Hunger Solutions is eager to work with the agency to develop client-friendly flyers, webinars, and social media graphics. We want to work together to make the process better for agency staff, clients, and advocates.

In summary, we are grateful to work closely with the Committee and DHS. We know the agency is committed to improving their practices. We are willing to support them in doing so. Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony on the performance of the Department of Human Services.



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

Respectfully,

Maggie Snow

Anti-Hunger Program Associate, SNAP

D.C. Hunger Solutions

Initiative of the Food Research Action Center

11 Dupont Circle NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036

msnow@dchunger.org | (202) 640-1088 ext. 3042