USDA's proposed regulations limiting the SNAP Standard Utility Allowance: Harm to Massachusetts

What would this proposed rule do?

Under current federal SNAP rules, states have the flexibility to set **Standard Utility Allowance** (SUA) amounts that are used to calculate shelter costs for low income households. States look at *every day utility costs* – heating, cooling, cooking, electricity for lights and appliances, trash collection, water/sewer and phone service. States historically have set their utility allowances to cover most SNAP household energy expenses during the highest energy usage months in the state or region. This SUA option simplifies the SNAP math and streamlines the state process for determining benefits. States know SNAP households need to eat every month!

USDA has proposed a "one-size-fits-all" rule that would force many states lower the value of allowed utility expenses to a limit set by USDA. **Such a sweeping change would gravely affect high energy cost states like MA**, where costs of energy and shelter (rent or home ownership) are some of the highest in the nation.

- ⇒ USDA estimates **45%** of MA SNAP households would lose SNAP – approximately **200,000** households. Households in New England and other high energy cost states face significant harm.
- ⇒ USDA estimates there would be an 8.8% reduction in net SNAP benefits in MA. This translates to a cut of over **$98 million in SNAP** per year, $8.2 million per month in cut SNAP.
- ⇒ Thousands of MA SNAP households would nearly **$50/month** in their benefits.

Which Massachusetts Households will lose SNAP benefits?

The MA households most likely to be harmed **are older adults (age 60+) and persons with severe disabilities**. That's because SNAP households without an elder or disable member often have a shelter costs cap in the SNAP math, although many working families may still be harmed.

What you can do?

Submit comments in opposition to these SNAP cuts! **December 2nd deadline.**
www.Frac.org/snap-sua-comments

Examples of the harm:

- Mary & Joe Smith are 70 years of age. Their combined total income is $1,600. Their rent is $640 (40% of their income) and they pay for oil heat and other utlities. Under current rules, their SNAP benefit is $82/mo. Under the proposed rule, it **drops by $48** – to only $34/mo.
- Lucy works 35 hours/week and earns $12/hour. She and her daughter share a room in friend's apartment. She pays $560/month in rent and pays a portion of the bills for the apartment's AC and heat. Under the proposed rule, the family would **lose $47/month** in SNAP (dropping from $122 to $75).

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