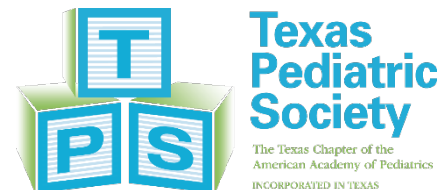




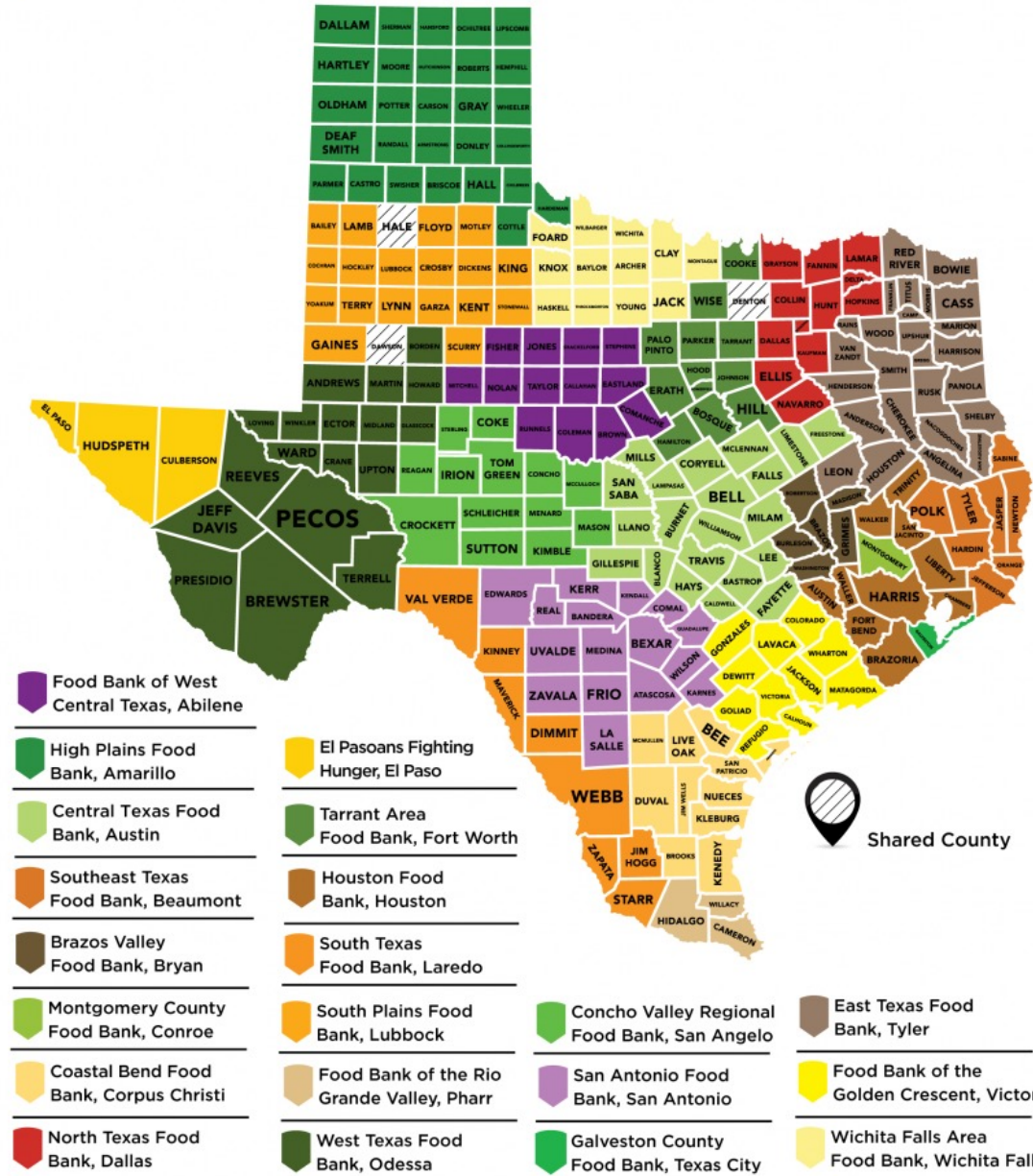
Food Insecurity in Texas: State Level Policies to Make an Impact

 UTHealth Houston
School of Public Health



254 COUNTIES

IN TEXAS PROVIDED
WITH HUNGER RELIEF BY
FEEDING TEXAS MEMBERS



Supporting Access to Healthy Food in Texas' 88th Legislative Session

JAMIE OLSON
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND ADVOCACY
FEEDING TEXAS

Texas Has One Of The Highest Hunger Rates in The Nation

13.7% of Texans of all ages are food insecure

3.6 million Texans rely on SNAP

\$1.97 Average SNAP benefit per meal in Texas



Sources: USDA, HHSC, and CBPP





Delays in Benefits



Timeliness challenges



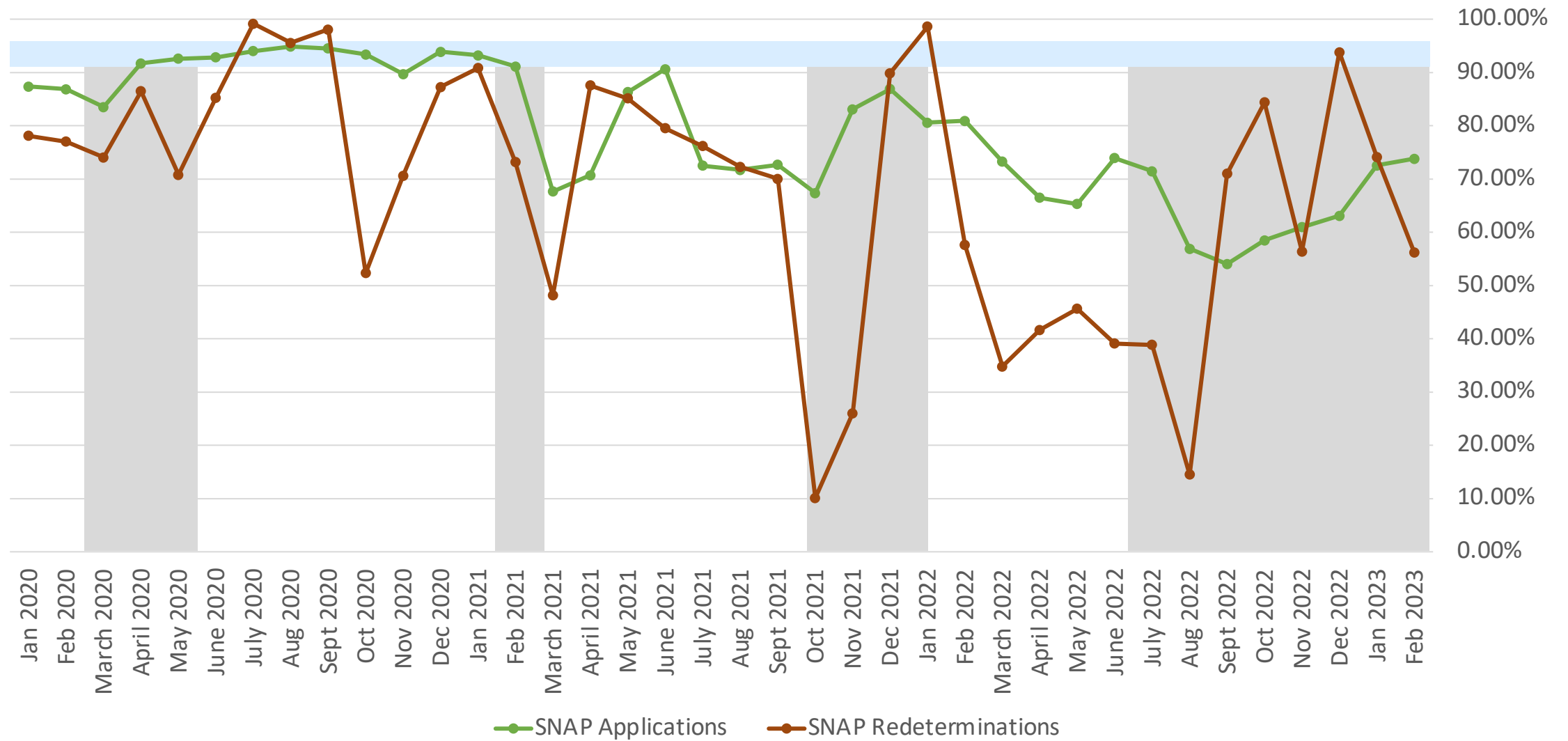
Staffing

Current Harms

Staffing the Eligibility System



Percentage of SNAP Applications and Redeterminations Processed Timely January 2020 to February 2023



Gray indicates FNS Waiver to extend SNAP recertifications

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Legislation

Modernize the SNAP Vehicle Asset Test

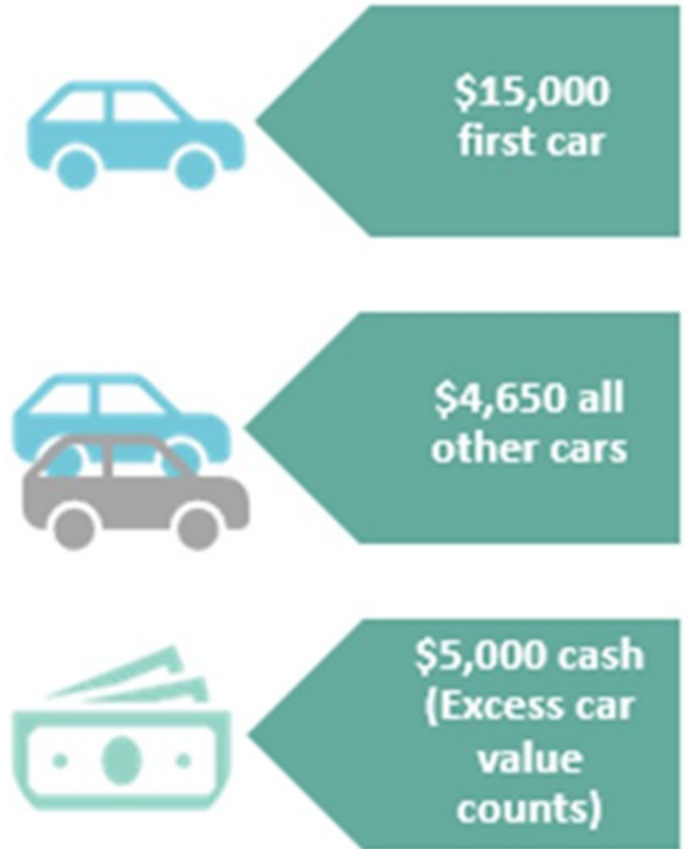
Bill #: HB 1287/ SB 273

Problem:

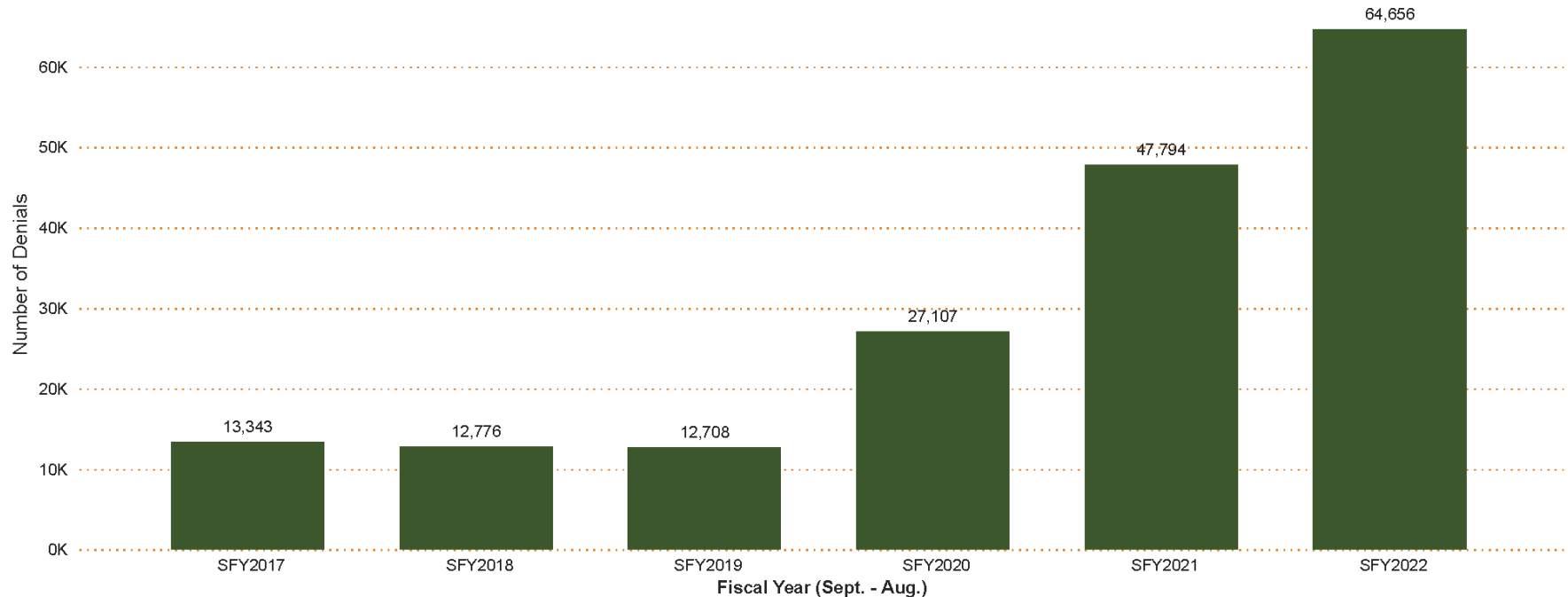
- The SNAP Vehicle Asset Test prevents thousands of hungry families from accessing food assistance for several reasons:
 - It is outdated.
 - It disproportionately harms Black and Latino households, especially two-parent and multigenerational households.
 - It jeopardizes people's ability to work.
 - It harms families when inflation is high.

Solution:

- Texas must modernize the SNAP Vehicle Asset Test by applying an inflationary adjustment to the current limits.



Total Texas SNAP Denials by Fiscal Year



Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission

REDUCE PAPERWORK FOR SNAP FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN Bill #:HB 2836



PROBLEM:

- Unnecessary paperwork requirements cause eligible families to lose their SNAP benefits and risk hunger until they can reapply for assistance.
- Texas only certifies families with children for a maximum of 6 months of benefits despite federal law allowing for 12 months with a report of any changes at 6 months.
- The recertification process, including an interview, is often difficult for families to complete within the 10-day window and failing to recertify in time is common.
- The extra paperwork burden leads to even longer delays in cases being approved by HHSC .

SOLUTION:

Texas should allow for 12 months of continuous eligibility, with an interim report at 6 months, for SNAP families with children.

Reduce Hunger at Community Colleges

Bill #: HB 1501
SB 557

Problem:

- College tuition costs are rising, and with current inflation, so are the costs of housing, food, and other necessities. The inability to afford these basic needs is the number one reason cited by community college students for not completing their education.
- Unfortunately, federal regulations severely limit access to SNAP for college students, especially those attending school more than half-time.

Solution:

- Texas HHSC should identify college degree programs that are vocational or technical in nature, so that students enrolled in these programs can receive SNAP.



Surplus Agricultural Products Grant: Article VI, Dept. of Ag. Rider 10(a)



Problem:

- Texans everywhere are struggling with the rising cost of food, and food banks are still seeing one-third more clients than they did prior to the pandemic.
- While inflation is hurting both Texas farmers and low-income Texas families, food banks are also coping with the rising costs of food and fuel.
- While need is increasing, USDA support for food banks and local donations fell sharply this year. Food banks project they will receive 31% less food in 2022 compared to 2021.

Solution:

- The Texas Legislature should ensure that food banks can continue to provide healthy produce to struggling Texans across the state by increasing funding for the Surplus Agricultural Products grant to \$20M for the biennium.

Healthy Food Is Good Medicine Bill #: HB 2983



Problem:

- Hunger and health are intricately linked. A poor-quality diet that lacks nutritious food has detrimental effects on a person's physical and mental health.
- Food insecurity is associated with higher health care costs. The Center for Disease Control suggests that food insecurity adds about \$2B annually to health care cost in Texas.

Solution:

- Medically-based nutrition programs, such as Medically Tailored Meals, should be funded by Medicaid and reimbursement provided to community-based organizations who deliver the meals.

Evidence base for Food is Medicine

Improved Food Insecurity

Improved dietary quality

Decreased inpatient admissions and ED visits

Decreased medical spending/healthcare costs

Target population specific outcomes: decreased HgbA1c, decreased preterm births

https://chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Food-is-Medicine_Peer-Reviewed-Research-in-the-U.S.1.pdf

Express Lane Eligibility

HB1599-Bucy

Leverage already-verified information from one state program (such as SNAP) to facilitate enrollment of eligible children in health coverage.

400,000 uninsured Texas children are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP

Texas HHS Non-Medical Drivers of Health Action Plan

Texas Health & Human Services Medicaid & CHIP Services
Non-Medical Drivers of Health Action Plan

Priorities



Food Insecurity



Housing



Transportation



Texas HHS Non-Medical Drivers of Health Action Plan

Goals



A) Build data infrastructure for statewide quality measurement and evaluation



B) Coordinate services and existing pathways throughout the delivery system



C) Develop policies and programs that incentivize MCOs and providers to identify and address health-related social needs while containing costs



D) Foster opportunities for collaboration with key partners

Federal Policy Context: White House Conference on Hunger Nutrition and Health

Improve access and affordability

Integrate nutrition and health

Empower consumers to make and have access to healthy choices

Support physical activity for all

Enhance nutrition and food security research

Federal Policy Context: 118th Congress

Farm Bill, Farm Bill, Farm Bill!

Questions?

Please insert your questions into the chat!

