

No vote on bill to eliminate asset test for food help

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By **Max Bomber**

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INDIANAPOLIS – A Senate committee debated a bill Monday that has the potential to provide food assistance to more than 1,000 additional Hoosier families.

The Children and Family Services Committee did not vote on Senate Bill 549, which would eliminate a requirement that the state consider a family's assets in determining eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also called SNAP and formerly known as food stamps.

Indiana is one of just eight states that still considers assets for eligibility.

Hoosier households with \$2,250 in resources, including bank accounts, cash, real estate, personal property or vehicles do not qualify for SNAP. The asset limits increases to \$3,250 for households with a member who is disabled or age 60 years and older, according to the Family and Social Services Administration.

A household's home and surrounding lot, household goods and personal belongings, and life insurance policies are not counted as assets in the SNAP program.

Derek Thomas, senior policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families, said the asset limit forces families to spend money they have saved in order to qualify for SNAP, which creates a reliance on the program. And he said the program already has a cliff that causes families to suddenly lose benefits.

“For SNAP, the cliff occurs when a parent with a preschooler and school-age child receives a \$0.50 raise from \$11.00/hour to \$11.50/hour,” he said. “This cliff is equal to about \$2,500 – give and take depending on the county – and is equal to more than the asset limit itself in all counties.”

Supporters say as many as 1,000 additional families could qualify for SNAP if the asset test is eliminated.

More than 900,000 people currently receive SNAP benefits. Of those, about 49 percent of have children, 29 percent are elderly and about a quarter have disabilities, said Emily Bryant, executive director of Feeding Indiana's Hungry.

The organization includes 11 regional food banks that have served more than 1.1 million Hoosiers. Of those, 47 percent receive SNAP.

Max Bomber is a reporter for [TheStatehouseFile.com](#), a news website powered by Franklin College journalism students.

Clarification: Testimony from Derek Thomas, senior policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families, has been clarified from the original story to better reflect his comments at the hearing.