



STATE OF ARKANSAS
SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS
GOVERNOR

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

April 15, 2025

Dear Secretary Rollins,

The United States faces a chronic disease epidemic. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and other chronic illnesses have become a massive burden on our nation's healthcare system, a personal struggle for millions of Americans, and an existential threat to America's future.

President Trump's administration is the first to make tackling America's chronic disease epidemic a priority and Arkansas is proud to stand by their side in that effort. One-third of our state has diabetes or pre-diabetes. It is clear that the current system encourages and subsidizes the overconsumption of unhealthy, highly processed, and addictive food and beverages.

Today, my administration is taking a stand against this system and announcing Arkansas' plan to remove candy and soft drinks as eligible expenses under a new, first-in-the-nation Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) waiver.

Food stamps are a \$119 billion program designed to supplement the lowest-income Americans' nutritional needs. However, instead of using food stamps to buy healthy, home-grown products like eggs, rice, chicken, and vegetables, about 23 percent of food stamp spending - \$27 billion each year - goes toward soft drinks, unhealthy snacks, candy, and desserts. In many cases, food stamps fail to supplement nutrition altogether and instead actively harm Arkansans' health. Our state Medicaid program spends at least \$300 million each year treating chronic illnesses. One Stanford study estimated that just by removing sugary drinks from food stamps, we could prevent obesity in 141,000 kids and Type 2 diabetes in 240,000 adults nationwide.

This waiver ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely on products that benefit recipients and don't subsidize broken federal systems. This is not just about removing soft drinks and candy from SNAP eligibility, but we will also allow the purchase of hot, ready-to-eat rotisserie chicken - an affordable source of protein. We plan to use the GS1 US food categorization system to make these policy changes easy for retailers to implement.

President Trump and his administration are laser-focused on tackling America's chronic disease epidemic, using taxpayer dollars more wisely, and ending perverse incentives in welfare programs. This fix to the food stamp program is a great place to start, and I look forward to working with your team at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to implement our waiver and make future reforms. I believe that once we get this plan in place, Arkansas will become a model of conservative reform as we work to Make America Healthy Again!

Respectfully,



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor of Arkansas