Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2026

Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Shiela Corley
Acting Administrator
Food and Nutrition Administration
5601 Sunnyside Avenue
Beltsville, MD 20740

Dear Secretary Rollins and Administrator Corley,

We write to express serious concern about recent reports of a rapidly growing backlog of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications in Texas and to request your swift intervention to ensure Texans can receive the food and nutrition assistance they need.

According to data shared by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Texans are facing increasing delays in accessing critical food and nutrition assistance because SNAP applications are not being processed in a timely manner. Texas' SNAP application backlog rose from approximately 3,700 pending applications in January 2026 to an astonishing 175,000 by early September 2026.[1] Federal law generally requires states to process SNAP applications and issue benefits within 30 days and to act on expedited applications within seven days—a standard Texas has not consistently met. The median time to process a Texas SNAP application is now 35 days, and 33 percent of applications fail to meet federal standards for processing times, compared to just 13 percent earlier in the year.[2] Each pending application represents a household that may be without the help it needs to keep food on the table.

Currently, fewer Texans are enrolled in SNAP than at any time in the last 17 years.[3] Timely access to SNAP is essential for Texans' health and financial security. Over six million Texans face food insecurity, the highest among all states.[4] These families rely on SNAP to access everyday groceries and essential items. Long delays disproportionately harm children, families, seniors, and Texans with disabilities who depend on assistance for their daily meals. Direct service providers who help Texans fill out SNAP and Medicaid applications, and use those programs when enrolled, report confusing and inaccurate interactions with Maximus, the HHSC contractor, that staffs the HHSC call center. Application assistants, who are experts in eligibility and enrollment, report Maximus contractors sharing inaccurate information about eligibility and procedures, such as recommending applicants reapply for Medicaid instead of requesting document review by HHSC staff. Inaccurate communications and unnecessary reapplications are part of the reason the SNAP backlog has grown

---

[1] Carolina Hauger and Adam Schwager, "Texas Faces $2.1B Spike in SNAP Costs Due to Payment Error Rate. Officials Say They Can Fix It," *ValleyCentral*, July 28, 2026, https://www.texastribune.org/2026/04/08/texas-hhsc-snap-fraud-food-stamp-big-beautiful-bill-senate-hearing/.
[2] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Texas Advance Warning Letter," May 21, 2024, https://doggett.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/doggett.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/TX%20Advance%20Warning%20Letter%20-%20Final.pdf
[3] Texas Health and Human Services Commission, *HHSC Data on Medicaid Backlog: September 2026* (Texans Care for Children, September 2026), PDF.
[4] Texas Health and Human Services Commission, *HHSC Data on Medicaid Backlog: September 2026* (Texans Care for Children, September 2026), PDF.

so extensively. They create additional administrative burdens for applicants who are already waiting months for food assistance.

We are also concerned about the combined effect of the SNAP changes in Public Law 119-21, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), on Texas' ability to deliver food assistance to eligible households on time. Expanded work requirements, narrowed exemptions, and newly imposed state cost sharing come at a time when SNAP caseloads remain high and families are already experiencing delays in benefit access. These policy shifts significantly increase the volume and complexity of eligibility determinations, documentation requests, and verification steps that HHSC must perform. HHSC has acknowledged that the new SNAP mandates require a closer review of each case, which indicates that implementing OBBBA SNAP provisions is directly reducing processing capacity.[5]

Implementing the OBBBA's provisions has required a faster turnaround on more complex eligibility determinations. HHSC's current infrastructure is already overwhelmed and layering additional administrative duties onto an under-resourced system threatens to widen delays and increase the likelihood that eligible families experience lapses or denials in benefits. Beginning October 1, 2027, new benefit cost-share provisions could expose Texas to an estimated $709 million in annual costs at its current error rate unless the state brings that rate below 6 percent.[6] This creates pressure for even more intensive case review. Together, these provisions place compounding demands on a system that was already struggling to meet federal timeliness standards. As a result, eligible Texans wait longer for food assistance.

Given the scope and trajectory of Texas' SNAP application backlog, we respectfully request that you:

1. Investigate the causes of the current SNAP application backlog at HHSC, including systems, staffing, vendor contracts, and policy changes that may be impeding timely determinations.
2. Exercise USDA's statutory enforcement authorities to ensure compliance with timeliness standards under 7 C.F.R. § 273.2 by enforcing the active corrective action plan initiated in 2023 with USDA. The plan lays out requirements for HHSC to present a root cause analysis of the backlog; provide short and long-term initiatives to sufficiently address the areas contributing to the low Application Processing Timeliness (APT) rate and growing backlog; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies for reaching an acceptable APT rate; and execute necessary staff training and retraining.[7]
3. Report back to our offices by **November 30, 2026**, with the findings of USDA's review and the steps USDA will take to monitor HHSC's progress and intervene if benchmarks are not met.

Texans who qualify for SNAP should not have to wait months to receive the benefits they rely on to keep food on the table. We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

---

[5] Terri Langford, "Texas Expected to Pay $700 Million in Penalties to the Feds for SNAP Errors by 2027," *The Texas Tribune*, April 8, 2026, https://www.valleycentral.com/news/texas-politics/texas-faces-2-1b-spike-in-snap-costs-due-to-payment-error-rate-officials-say-they-can-fix-it/.

[6] Feeding Texas, "Hunger in Texas," https://www.feedingtexas.org/learn-about-hunger/hunger-in-texas/.

[7] Huff, Jess. "Texas SNAP participation drops to a 17-year low as the feds tighten eligibility." (Texas Tribune, October 2026).

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

Greg Casar
Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Julie Johnson
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress