Essex County NY Established 1799

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Essex County Board Passes Resolution Formally Requesting Two-Year Delay on Federal SNAP Cost Shifts.

ELIZABETHTOWN, NY – At its regular board meeting on Tuesday, September 8, the Essex County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution formally requesting federal lawmakers enact a two-year delay on new SNAP administrative and benefit cost-sharing requirements under federal legislation (H.R. 1), while urging New York State to hold local governments harmless if the federal government does not act.

For more than 50 years, the federal government has covered 50% of SNAP administrative costs. Under changes authorized in H.R. 1 (House Resolution 1), also know as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the federal share will decrease to 25%. Because New York counties are responsible for the non-federal share of SNAP administrative costs, counties will go from covering 50% of these costs to covering 75%. This reduction shifts an estimated $168 million annually to New York local governments—including $57 million for upstate counties. For Essex County, the change is estimated to increase annual county costs by approximately $203,853.

A separate federal provision will require states to pay a share of SNAP benefit costs based on their SNAP payment error rates. Federal error rates measure administrative and paperwork processing discrepancies and do not equal fraud, waste, or abuse. Historically, Essex County's SNAP payment error rate has remained very low, reflecting strong local administration of the program. Under the new federal system, the benefit cost-sharing requirement is based on New York State's payment error rate rather than individual county rates. New York's SNAP payment error rate used for the initial determination places the state in the 15% benefit cost-sharing tier representing an estimated $1.1 billion in potential statewide costs. If New York State passes these costs down to local counties, Essex County could face an additional cost of approximately $1 million annually, despite the county's track record of accurate SNAP administration.

For many households, wages do not keep pace with the rising cost of groceries. The funding changes come at a time when local demand for support remains high. County data shows that more than 2,900 residents currently receive SNAP benefits. Of these recipients, 30% are over age 60, and 27% are under age 18. Of the county's total population, 24.9% is age 65 or older—the highest rate in the region.

Michael Mascarenas, County Manager, emphasized "It's important to be clear about what this legislation does. There were no direct cuts to SNAP benefits; rather, the federal government reduced its share of the costs. Essex County has consistently maintained an extremely low SNAP payment error rate—so low that it is insignificant—yet we may still be affected by New York's statewide rate. For Essex County, these changes could create an unexpected cost of approximately $1 million annually. To put that in perspective, this additional cost alone would exceed what Essex County is allowed to raise under our annual tax cap, which is around $800,000. We have a responsibility to manage county finances carefully while making sure our residents have access to these services. A two-year delay would give us time to understand these costs and plan accordingly without putting unnecessary pressure on the county or the people we serve."

"The Board recognizes the importance of SNAP to residents across Essex County, and we also have a responsibility to protect our local taxpayers," added Stephen McNally, Chair of the Essex County Board of Supervisors. "These changes mark a major transition in how SNAP costs are shared, and counties need time to understand the full financial impact. This resolution asks for that time so we can prepare for these changes and maintain the services in our communities."

Davina Thurston, Town Supervisor of St. Armand/Bloomingdale and Chair of the Essex County Human Services Committee stated, "Our local department works very efficiently to process SNAP applications accurately. A two-year implementation window gives the Board of Supervisors and our Human Services Committee the necessary time to understand how these changes will affect the county and make sure we are prepared for the financial and administrative updates."

Angie Allen, Commissioner for the Department of Social Services, highlighted "Our department's focus is on maintaining high standards of service and accuracy for the thousands of Essex County residents who receive SNAP. A two-year pause would give us time to review the state guidelines, make any necessary changes to our procedures, and prepare our staff for the new requirements."

The new administrative cost-sharing requirements are scheduled to take effect October 1, 2026, with the new SNAP benefit cost-sharing requirements scheduled to take effect October 1, 2027.

Copies of the resolution will be sent directly to federal representatives, state lawmakers, New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), and Governor Kathy Hochul.

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