

## Day 8: How Poverty Impacts Food Security

*"What keeps a poor child in Appalachia poor is not what keeps a poor child in Chicago poor—even if from a distance, the outcomes look the same. And what keeps an able-bodied Black woman poor is not what keeps a disabled white man poor, even if the outcomes look the same." -Ijeoma Oluo, Author, "So You Want to Talk about Race"*

In an area as developed and wealthy as the National Capital Area is, it houses a large population of people who go hungry. In Fairfax County, one of the wealthiest counties in the country, over 30% of students relied on Free and Reduced Meals (FARM) to eat in 2019. Families working one or two low-wage jobs with multiple kids in the household depend on safety-net programs like SNAP and the FARM programs offered through schools to save money from food on other essentials like rent and utilities. Many of the people struggling with hunger qualify as ALICE, Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. These are working individuals who live paycheck to paycheck, failing to earn enough money to cover the cost of living and essentials. ALICE individuals generally must make tough choices on how to budget and cut their money so they can afford to live.

Federal benefits like unemployment and food stamps are based on the metrics determined by the Federal Poverty Line, a benchmark that doesn't consider cost of living. Workers who earn more money than the Federal Poverty Line permits lose access to all federal benefits, even if it's just \$100 more. For example, an individual with a take-home pay of \$1,000 a month would qualify to receive \$194 a month in food stamps, but if they made \$1,100, they wouldn't qualify to receive food stamps at all, despite there only being a \$100 difference. The government has suggested that "welfare discourage[s] able-bodied adults from working," invoking the longstanding myth that people are impoverished because of lack of motivation and merit, and that they rely on public assistance out of laziness. In truth, the "Welfare Queen" myth makes clear that many individuals are forced to rely on public assistance because of inequities baked into U.S. policing and capitalism.

### Today's Challenge:

**OPTION 1:** [Familiarize yourself with the process of applying for food stamps.](#) Would you be able to survive on \$29 a week for groceries? This is the average allotment for food stamp users. (3 minutes)

**OPTION 2:** Watch CNBC's documentary ["Who Gets Rich off School Lunches?"](#) and learn how school lunch options are allowing some companies to take in billions of dollars. Is there a more fiscally responsible way to keep entire communities fed with federal dollars? (12 minutes)

**OPTION 3:** [Read "Who is Really on Food Stamps?"](#) and familiarize yourself with some of the common misconceptions surrounding food stamps and who's using them.

**OPTION 4:** Read about how Conservatives have long been sounding the alarm about "undeserving" people receiving public assistance. [These fears have deep ties to racism and the policing of Black women's bodies.](#) (8 minutes)