



March 24, 2026

**RE: Protect Children by Preserving Dignity and Access in SNAP Policies, and Oppose House File 3603**

Dear Chair West and Members of the Children and Families Committee:

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota (CDF-MN) researches, develops and advocates for policies and programs that improve the health and well-being of children, and increase the economic security of families. We urge you to oppose House File 3603, because it undermines the well-being of Minnesota children and the purposes of SNAP.

Legislation that restricts the foods families using SNAP can purchase - such as prohibiting candy, soda, or energy drinks - does not improve access to healthy food or address the real barriers families face. Instead, it limits choice, increases stigma at stores and in the check-out lines, and adds stress for parents and caregivers - factors that ultimately undermine SNAP's effectiveness and negatively impact children. At its core, SNAP is an anti-hunger program designed to ensure that children and families have consistent access to food. For many households, it is a lifeline that helps stabilize daily life. Policies that single out and limit the choices of SNAP participants create a two-tiered system in which families using SNAP are subject to judgment and control, while other families are not. This undermines dignity and autonomy, both of which are critical to family well-being and healthy child development.

Children do not thrive in environments where their caregivers are scrutinized or stigmatized. Research in child development consistently shows that stress within a household - especially stress tied to poverty and public scrutiny - can negatively impact children's emotional security and long-term outcomes. Restrictive SNAP policies risk increasing that stress by sending a message that families cannot be trusted to make decisions for their children.

Additionally, these types of restrictions oversimplify nutrition and fail to address the real barriers families face. Access to affordable, healthy foods is shaped by factors like neighborhood food availability, time constraints, transportation, and cost. Singling out certain items does not improve these conditions. Instead, it diverts attention from meaningful solutions - such as increasing benefit adequacy, expanding access to fresh foods, and investing in community-based nutrition supports.

It is also important to recognize that food is more than fuel, especially for children. Food plays a role in social inclusion, celebration, and childhood. Prohibiting certain items may seem minor, but for a child, being able to share a treat at a birthday party or enjoy a special snack can be part of feeling included and cared for. Policies that restrict these small but meaningful experiences can unintentionally deepen feelings of exclusion.

If we are truly committed to child well-being, our policies must be rooted in trust, dignity, and a comprehensive understanding of what families need to thrive. Rather than imposing limitations that stigmatize and control, we should focus on strengthening families' ability to access nutritious food and provide for their children in ways that reflect their family's values.

We all share the goal of ensuring children grow up healthy and supported. This bill, however, moves us in the wrong direction. We urge you to oppose this bill and instead invest in policies that genuinely advance child well-being: strengthening SNAP benefits, improving access to nutritious foods, and supporting families with the respect and dignity they deserve. Thank you for your commitment to Minnesota children. We are grateful for your service and your continued commitment to the well-being of Minnesota children.

Together For Children,

/s/ Alexandra Fitzsimmons, Esq.  
Senior Policy Director



March 24, 2026

Representative West and Representative Kotyza-Witthuhn  
Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee  
Centennial Office Building (COB)  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: HF 3831 – SNAP Modifications – Asset Test Verification**

Dear Chair West, Chair Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

I am writing to share concerns about HF 3831 from a county focused, operational and systems-management perspective. Our 87 counties are in the middle of significant work and change as a result federal changes included in the 2025 federal reconciliation bill (HR 1). Counties urge our focus to remain on strengthening and modernizing eligibility systems, improving manuals and guidance, and ensuring staff have the tools they need to deliver consistent, accurate service.

HR 1 introduces major changes to eligibility and escalates the importance of improving the state Payment Error Rate (PER) by imposing a financial penalty via cost share. Adapting to these changes and improving accuracy requires substantial attention to system redesign, training, workflow adjustment and quality assurance. Adding new program complexity at this time – particularly through additional verification requirements or expanding eligibility checks – will pull resources and focus away from foundational modernization and accuracy work already underway.

Counties need stability and clarity to implement HR1 effectively. As a system, the most impactful improvements we can make right now are:

- updating and simplifying manuals
- modernizing systems and increasing automation
- ensuring consistent interpretation and guidance across the state
- increasing training modes and availability to support staff

Introducing the new eligibility verification requirements included in HF 3831 before this foundation is in place risks increasing errors, slowing processing times, and creating unnecessary strain on an already taxed system and workforce. Additionally, codifying policies in state statute for federal programs introduces the potential for future complexity and incongruity.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that policy changes adding administrative complexity not be considered for public assistance programs until technology systems are modernized, workforce supports are improved and all HR1 changes are fully implemented and stabilized.



Thank you for considering the operational and system-level impacts on counties as we work to implement federal changes effectively and responsibly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angie Thies".

Angie Thies  
Child Wellbeing Policy Analyst  
Association of Minnesota Counties

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Verrette".

Paul Verrette  
Director, MACSSA  
Human Services Policy Analyst, AMC

Cc: Representative Altendorf