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## **LEGAL AID SUES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO STOP “CRUEL AND INEFFECTIVE” NEW FOOD STAMPS RULE**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., January 16, 2020** – The [Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia](#) (Legal Aid) is filing a [federal lawsuit](#) today to stop implementation of a new Trump Administration rule that could [cut about 700,000 Americans off food stamps](#).

[The new rule](#), scheduled to go into effect on April 1, would make it more difficult for states to obtain waivers of an onerous federal requirement within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, commonly known as food stamps). The rule prevents so-called “able-bodied adults without dependents” from receiving SNAP benefits for 33 of 36 months, unless they meet certain work requirements. Historically, states and the District of Columbia have been able to obtain waivers of this time limit if they could show that the state (or an area within the state) lacked sufficient jobs for these adults.

“Taking food off the table from Americans who are already struggling to make ends meet is both cruel and ineffective,” said Eric Angel, Executive Director of Legal Aid. “SNAP benefits are an essential part of the safety net for a large number of people who critically need them. Implementation of this rule [will not increase the employment rate among SNAP beneficiaries. But it will most definitely increase hunger.](#)”

The time limit has been waived in the District for more than two decades, given the long-standing challenges that low-income District residents face in obtaining steady employment. Under this rule, the District would no longer be able to obtain a time limit waiver even though the District’s overall unemployment rate exceeds the national average, with [some wards experiencing more than two times the national average](#). The imposition of the time limits will also have a negative racial impact, disproportionately and significantly increasing [food insecurity](#) in communities of color.

Legal Aid and the law firm of [Alston & Bird LLP](#) are filing the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of social services agency [Bread for the City](#) and individual DC residents currently receiving food stamps.

One of the named plaintiffs, Mr. S, struggles with chronic homelessness and mental and physical impairments that interfere with his ability to work but are not severe enough for

him to qualify for federal disability benefits. As Mr. S says in his declaration, “Without food stamps, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to eat.”

Legal Aid’s [complaint](#) – together with a [request for preliminary injunction](#) to stop the rule from going into effect while the litigation is pending – alleges that the Administration exceeded its statutory authority in promulgating the rule and is “arbitrary and capricious” because the U.S. Department of Agriculture (among other failures) did not respond substantively to [public comments about the rule’s impact](#).

“The agency’s new rule is an unforced error that creates an unnecessary emergency with profound local and national implications,” said [Daniel G. Jarcho](#), Partner at Alston & Bird LLP. “In DC alone, roughly 13,000 individuals could suffer irreparable harm by losing their SNAP benefits unless the Court stops the rule from going into effect.”

Also today, more than a dozen states attorney generals filed a similar challenge in the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. Legal Aid anticipates that the lawsuits will be consolidated.

## **About Legal Aid**

Legal Aid was formed in 1932 to “provide legal aid and counsel to indigent persons in civil law matters and to encourage measures by which the law may better protect and serve their needs.” Legal Aid is the oldest and largest general civil legal services program in the District of Columbia. Over the last 88 years, Legal Aid staff and volunteers have been making justice real – in individual and systemic ways – for tens of thousands of persons living in poverty in the District. The largest part of our work is comprised of individual representation in housing, domestic violence/family, public benefits, and consumer law, although we also work on immigration law matters and help individuals with the collateral consequences of their involvement with the criminal justice system. From the experiences of our clients, we identify opportunities for law reform, public policy advocacy, and systemic reform litigation. For more information about Legal Aid please visit our website, [www.legalaiddc.org](http://www.legalaiddc.org), and our blog, [www.MakingJusticeReal.Org](http://www.MakingJusticeReal.Org).