



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Sen. Gounardes Joins Community Advocates to Demand Comprehensive Response to EBT Theft

ANDREW GOUNARDES March 28, 2025

| ISSUE: **FOOD ACCESS, SNAP, FOOD STAMPS, POVERTY**



EBT Skimming Continues to Deprive Low-Income New Yorkers of Vital Benefits and Costs Taxpayers Tens of Millions Annually

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Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY - State Senator Andrew Gounardes joined Congressman Dan Goldman, Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes, Assemblymember Grace Lee, Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, advocates, and impacted New Yorkers in Red Hook today to demand a comprehensive change to state and federal law to address the urgent issue of stolen EBT benefits. Since the termination of the federal SNAP reimbursement fund on December 20th, 2024, Red Hook Initiative, a local community-based organization, has filed 85 individual claims for reimbursement, totaling over \$40,000 of benefits stolen from Red Hook's residents- leaving New York's most vulnerable without stable access to food.

Of the over 465,000 SNAP reimbursement claims filed nationwide, **New York accounted** for 20% of those claims. According to the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) from August 2023 to December 2024 85,000 claims were made of stolen public benefits. The total amount of stolen SNAP assistance was \$65 million during the same period with nearly \$40 million worth of benefits being replaced with federal dollars. This represents over 84,000 households. The number of New Yorkers who have experienced SNAP fraud is likely higher-leaving thousands of New Yorkers to go hungry.

The coalition is calling for the final New York State Budget to include:

- **S.403** to establish a SNAP and cash assistance fraud victims compensation fund
- **S.1465** which would transition New York State to the use of chip cards for public benefits to prevent this theft from occurring.

Congressman Dan Goldman (NY-10) will lead the federal effort to tackle this issue head-on by introducing the 'Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act' in the coming months. The act will require USDA to update its cybersecurity regulations and ensure EBT cards feature anti-fraud technology.

SNAP is the most effective way for New York to address food insecurity, with nearly 3 million residents relying on the program for assistance. The majority of households receiving SNAP are families with children, and nearly 47% include seniors or people with disabilities. The coalition called for state and federal leadership to act to protect this vital resource and support those impacted by theft.

"Neighbors in Red Hook and across the city have been the victim of EBT theft, a particularly cruel crime that's literally taking food out of the mouths of seniors and children," said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. "And thanks to misguided changes in federal policy, Washington is no longer reimbursing victims of EBT theft for stolen benefits, leaving our most vulnerable neighbors hanging without money to pay for groceries. That's unacceptable. Ensuring our neighbors don't go hungry is the bare minimum. We need to work at all levels of government to give victims the support they need and ensure EBT cards are secure."

"Each year, tens of millions of dollars in essential food benefits are stolen from New Yorkers—benefits that families rely on to put food on the table," **Congressman Dan Goldman said**. "Yet House Republicans have refused to renew the only way for New Yorkers to be reimbursed for SNAP theft, leaving seniors, working families, and children to go hungry. The Red Hook community, in particular, has been hit hard by the rise in SNAP theft. I will soon be introducing federal legislation to strengthen SNAP cybersecurity to prevent this problem from occurring in the future, but in the meantime, I call on New York Republicans to pass legislation to reimburse victims of theft."

"Recent news has made it clear, the Trump Administration plans to put the wants of a few billionaires over the needs of the rest of the country. It is time for New York to step up and provide the critical relief our vulnerable populations desperately need," said **Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes**. "Every week I have seniors, mothers, and fathers coming into my office seeking help with food insecurity. We need to transition to chip-enabled cards for SNAP

benefits and provide an avenue for reimbursement for those impacted by SNAP theft; this is how we provide for the working class. The bills we have re-introduced this year, A3578 and A0699, both aim to address that.”

“For all of their supposed concerns about public safety, New York House Republicans have said nothing about Elon Musks’ removal of funding to address public benefits theft in the last House spending bill. They would rather advance tax breaks for billionaires than address food insecurity among New Yorkers. I am glad Congressman Goldman will attempt to address this in the House and here in the state we cannot wait for Congress to act. California, Oklahoma, and other states are moving forward and implementing chip-enabled EBT cards, which our state Department of Labor is using already. New York is run by Democrats and it is time we address this by passing and funding my bill to switch to more secure chip-enabled cards and Assembly Member Mitaynes’ bill to establish a compensation fund. New Yorkers need relief. We must act,” **said Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas.**

“Red Hook Initiative is proud to join our State and Federal leaders in demanding comprehensive action in response to EBT theft. EBT theft has left dozens of Red Hook residents without critical food resources for their families,” said **Red Hook Initiative Executive Director Michael Partis.** “As protections at the federal level have ended, those impacted by EBT theft are left with no safety net. Urgent action is needed to protect critical food resources for families in need.”

"The Chinese-American Planning Council sees first-hand how SNAP and public benefits sustain countless New York families, particularly those from immigrant and low-income backgrounds. According to the Mayor's Center for Economic Opportunity, Asian American Pacific Islander New Yorkers have the highest rate of poverty in New York City. Benefits skimming devastates AAPI families and their ability to put food on the table. We call for the quick passage of this package of legislation along with the deep investment required to

protect our communities and ensure they receive the food assistance they desperately need." said **Wayne Ho, President & CEO of the Chinese American Planning Council (CPC)**.

"Preventing SNAP skimming and protecting our community's benefits is a top priority—no one should have their assistance stolen by criminals. We are grateful to Congressman Dan Goldman and Assembly Member Marcela Mitaynes for leading the fight against these scams and working to ensure that vital food assistance reaches those who need it most." said **President & CEO of Homecrest Community Services, Wai Yee Chan**. "With Brooklyn experiencing the highest number of SNAP fraud claims—51,774 in total—this is a pressing issue for Homecrest. We strongly support creating a fraud victims' compensation fund, transitioning New York State to chip-enabled benefit cards to prevent future theft, and advancing the federal Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act".

"Trump and Republicans don't care if families go hungry as they threaten to cut SNAP benefits," said **Assemblymember Grace Lee**. "In New York, we believe no family should go hungry. That's why we're asking for \$50mm in this year's budget to create a reimbursement fund for victims of SNAP theft. We also know that by investing \$40mm in the budget for modernizing EBT technology we can drastically reduce theft and keep food on New Yorker's tables."

"The time to act is now! Too many families have suffered due to SNAP skimming, and it's time for New York to take action. Families relying on SNAP should not have to live in fear of losing benefits and should not have to worry about funds not being returned to them. No one should lose the ability to feed their families because of preventable fraud", said **Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson**. "That's why we're pushing for the passage of A3578/S403 to create a compensation fund for victims, A0699/S1465 to implement secure chip technology, and the federal Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act. As chair of the Task force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy— and as someone who has relied on SNAP- I know how

vital these benefits are, and we must ensure families are protected. We must modernize EBT security now.”

"EBT theft is an urgent issue for our local community and it's only grown more prevalent. Red Hook residents have had tens of thousands of dollars in benefits stolen from them without any reimbursement," said **Council Member Alexa Avilés**. "This has left working-class New Yorkers without food security for themselves and their families. Our state must fill the gap where our federal government has failed. That's why I'm joining Assembly Member Mitaynes and Red Hook Initiative to demand that New York State allocate \$50 million for a SNAP and cash assistance fraud victims compensation fund and \$4 million towards preventing this type of fraud in the future."

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2025-S403

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Establishes a SNAP and cash assistance fraud victims compensation fund; appropriation

December 30, 2024

In Senate Committee **Finance**

Sponsored by Zellnor Myrie

Do you support this bill?

2025-S1465

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Requires the implementation of an electronic benefit transfer system

January 10, 2025

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Jose M. Serrano

Do you support this bill?

NAY