



New Mexico State Senate

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SENATOR CRYSTAL BRANTLEY

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Director Charles Sallee
Legislative Finance Committee
State Capitol
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Director Sallee,

As the elected Senator for District 35, I represent some of the most rural, underserved, and food-insecure communities in New Mexico. During the recent special session, the Legislature acted decisively to ensure continued nutrition assistance for families after the federal government's failure to provide timely SNAP funding. As part of that action, House Bill 1 was amended to direct the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) to conduct a program evaluation of the state's administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

This evaluation has taken on heightened urgency following the KRQE News 13 investigation published this week, which exposed the illicit exchange of SNAP EBT benefits for fentanyl in Sierra County. In that case, deputies investigating the overdose death of a 26-year-old father uncovered text messages showing a local resident offering \$500–\$700 of his family's SNAP benefits in exchange for fentanyl pills. Deputies confirmed the transactions on surveillance video, ultimately resulting in drug-trafficking and coupon-fraud charges.

This deeply troubling exploitation of a taxpayer-funded nutrition program underscores the need for a comprehensive and meaningful review. SNAP is a lifeline for thousands of New Mexican families, and the evaluation mandated under HB 1 must thoroughly assess both administrative procedures and the vulnerabilities that allow benefits to be diverted into criminal markets.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the LFC incorporate the following directives into its evaluation:

- First, solicit information from all relevant state and local law-enforcement agencies regarding any ongoing investigations—open or recently adjudicated—that involve the misuse, trafficking, or fraudulent exchange of SNAP benefits.
- Coordinate directly with the Department of Public Safety and any other pertinent law-enforcement agencies to ensure that criminal activity uncovered during the evaluation is promptly referred for investigation and prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.
- Ensure that both the preliminary report, due January 20, 2026, and the final report, due July 1, 2026, clearly document all findings related to fraud, waste, abuse, or suspected criminal conduct involving SNAP benefits.
- Identify and recommend statutory remedies in the final report if prosecutors or the Attorney General lack the authority to use audit findings, SNAP records, or transactional data in criminal cases.

Finally, in alignment with the recent request issued to all states by Brooke L. Rollins, the 33rd United States Secretary of Agriculture, urging strengthened transparency and accountability in SNAP administration nationwide, I ask that the completed evaluation be formally transmitted to Secretary Rollins at the U.S. Department of Agriculture upon its completion. This will ensure New Mexico contributes fully to federal oversight efforts and demonstrates our commitment to protecting the integrity of the nation's largest nutrition assistance program.

Safeguarding SNAP is not only a fiscal responsibility—it is a matter of public trust and public safety. Families in my district depend on these benefits, and they deserve confidence that the program is being protected from diversion, exploitation, and criminal abuse. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any additional information.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Should you have any questions, I am available at any time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "C Brantley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "C" being large and stylized.

Senator Crystal Brantley
New Mexico State Senate District 35