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Peter Brennan & Kevin Daigle: Bill to change SNAP rules a nightmare for retailers

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Kevin Daigle



Peter Brennan

NEW HAMPSHIRE's grocery shops and convenience stores are cornerstones of our communities. They are where people buy food, fill up on gas, pick up their prescriptions, and run into their neighbors. Together, members of the New Hampshire Grocers Association and the New England Convenience Store and Energy Marketers Association feed over a million Granite Staters annually and employ thousands of people.

In 2026, the New Hampshire Legislature will consider legislation that could upend many of these local businesses. Well-intentioned but dangerously misguided bills like SB 615 would alter how SNAP benefits are administered at the state level, cherry-picking what items SNAP recipients can and cannot purchase. Whatever the bill sponsors' motives, they must consider the unintended adverse consequences of their legislation for New Hampshire's local grocers and stores.

Roughly 75,000 New Hampshire residents rely on SNAP, meaning any changes to how the state administers this program will ripple through the economy. The first businesses impacted will be ones like ours that serve SNAP recipients directly.

If enacted, **SB 615** would impose new state-specific rules, verification requirements, and purchasing restrictions that would make SNAP harder to use and administer. These are not cut-and-dry administrative changes. Grocery and convenience stores operate on razor-thin margins, and even minor disruptions in SNAP transactions can lead to fewer sales, reduced staffing, and shortened hours for workers.

Many of New Hampshire's independent and rural retailers rely on SNAP purchases as a meaningful share of their business. When SNAP dollars decline or become harder to process, those stores feel it immediately. That harm extends outward, affecting employees, suppliers, and, ultimately, the communities that depend on these retailers.

Senate Bill 615 creates a technological and administrative nightmare for stores like ours. Retailers across New England use shared electronic benefit transfer (EBT) systems and regional technology platforms designed to operate consistently across state lines. If New Hampshire adopts its own SNAP rules, retailers may be forced to overhaul systems for our state alone. That means costly software changes, compliance upgrades, and employee retraining.

Who will pay the cost for these disruptions? There are no good answers. They would either be absorbed by businesses or passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices, at a time when families are already struggling with rising food and fuel prices.

SB 615 also poses broader risks to our retail economy. The New Hampshire advantage has long been built on economic freedom, low taxes, and a business-friendly environment.

This bill would also threaten one of New Hampshire's greatest economic strengths: cross-border commerce. Every day, consumers from Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine travel here to shop, drawn by our low taxes, predictable rules, and business-friendly environment. These trips do not end at the grocery store. Shoppers also buy gas, eat at local restaurants, and support nearby shops and services, spending that sustains thousands of small businesses, especially in border communities.

Policies that add unnecessary complexity put that advantage at risk. Creating roadblocks at the checkout counter, particularly rules that differ from neighboring states, would discourage out-of-state consumers from shopping here. Confusing or restrictive SNAP rules send the message that New Hampshire is becoming harder, not easier, to do business with. If SNAP recipients can buy specific products at home but not here, they will stop crossing the border. When that happens, New Hampshire loses far more than grocery sales – it loses the ripple of economic activity that follows.

We can protect the integrity of the SNAP program without hurting local grocers and retailers. We urge lawmakers to pause, listen to consumers and store owners. Let's preserve New Hampshire's pro-economic approach, support local businesses, and ensure our state remains a destination where people want to shop.

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