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N.J. suing Trump administration over plan to cut thousands of residents from food stamps

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New Jersey is suing the federal government over a rule change that could strip food benefits from thousands.

Currently, some adults may only receive food stamps for three months during a three-year period if they're not working or volunteering. However, states may extend that window if residents are having a hard time finding jobs.

The new rule would make it harder for states to grant those extensions.

About 12,000 people in New Jersey could lose benefits, out of more than 670,000 residents in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

"Taking food off the table of someone who's struggling won't help them thrive, and in this case, it violates federal law," said state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal in a statement.

The lawsuit argues that this change needs Congressional approval, and that the federal government didn't follow the correct process for changing rules.

Thirteen other states, along with Washington D.C. and New York City, were also part of the suit, which was filed Thursday in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Sonny Perdue, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, previously argued that there are enough jobs to support the change.

"Now, in the midst of the strongest economy in a generation, we need everyone who can work, to work," Perdue said in a statement last month.

Messages left with the department about the lawsuit were not immediately returned.

About 3.4% of state residents looking for work were unemployed in November, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, similar to the country overall.

The rule is scheduled to take effect in April.

This change is different from a proposal to cut the program's budget, which could remove tens of thousands more from benefits.