

# LOSING A LIFELINE

Dollar store closures impact food  
access in low-income areas



A closed Family Dollar store is seen in Nashville, Tenn. The chain has closed nearly 1,000 stores. KEVIN WURM/REUTERS

**Jessica DiNapoli and Kaylee Kang** | REUTERS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Nearly every day, Latrina Begley, 37, of Nashville, or one of her six children, shopped at the Family Dollar down the hill from their home, using federal food benefits to buy Hot Pockets or frozen pizza, and staples like milk. ● But Family Dollar shut down the location earlier this year, as part of closures of nearly 1,000 stores out of its 8,200, a move intended to boost profits. ● Cuts last year to the largest U.S. anti-hunger safety net, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, previously called food stamps, after the end of the COVID pandemic hit the retailer's sales in the months before the closures. Purchases made with SNAP represent \$11 out of every \$100 spent at the bargain chain, according to retail research firm HSA Consulting.

The closure leaves Begley with only a few convenience stores within one mile of the former Family Dollar, expensive options she can't afford. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified her neighborhood, in a historically Black part of Nashville, as low-income and with low-access to healthy, affordable food, an area formerly called a food desert.

"It's harder for us and me," said Begley, who works at the city's housing agency. "I have to stop after work, or else we don't have anything for the night."

Begley said she relies on her mother to help with child care and to make ends meet, and, if she did not have her, would turn to food pantries.

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