

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2017

The Honorable Diane Black
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
B-234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
134 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Black and Ranking Member Yarmuth:

As Members of the Committee on Agriculture, we write to provide additional views to the Committee's Budget Views and Estimates letter that was considered and adopted by the Committee on March 1, 2017. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these additional views.

One of our Committee's most significant areas of jurisdiction is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. SNAP is our nation's best chance to alleviate hunger across our country. It provides our most vulnerable neighbors with a modest nutrition assistance benefit—on average, just \$1.40 per person, per meal—to supplement their food budgets. The program currently serves about 43 million Americans in both urban and rural areas, and its entitlement structure allows the program to expand during times of economic hardship and contract as conditions improve. Among those households that can work, the vast majority do in the year before or after receiving benefits.

During the 114th Congress, the House Agriculture Committee undertook a thorough review of SNAP. We held 18 hearings and heard more than 30 hours of testimony from over 60 experts which resulted in 830 pages of official hearing record. We learned from experts—conservative and liberal—that SNAP benefits should not be cut, and that current benefits are inadequate. We also learned that SNAP does not discourage work, and that case management and job training programs can be successful in helping to move people out of poverty, but those efforts require a well-funded, multi-year commitment.

Each year, SNAP provides millions of children, seniors, veterans, and other vulnerable adults with food assistance. It is an efficient and effective program that helps families lift themselves out of poverty, and cuts extreme poverty almost in half. SNAP improves health, educational, and economic outcomes, and increases the incomes of working families. Recent innovations in the program have encouraged healthier eating and have increased SNAP participants' consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. An increase in SNAP benefits would likely only improve these outcomes, with recent research confirming that just a \$30 increase in monthly SNAP benefits for households could lead to healthier eating and lower rates of food insecurity.

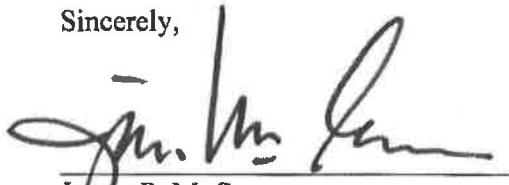
Between 2007 and 2012, SNAP caseloads and spending grew as a result of the most recent economic recession, but that was to be expected. Indeed, the program worked as it was intended and expanded to respond quickly and effectively to an economic downturn. As our economy continues to recover, SNAP participation has declined during the past several years.

Because of this decline in SNAP participation and other factors like low food inflation, recent projections from the Congressional Budget Office estimate that SNAP will save over **\$92 billion** over 10 years as compared to baseline projections used to write the 2014 Farm Bill. We caution the Committee, however, that some of the caseload decline is attributable to the return of the three-month time limit in 20 states for non-disabled childless adults who are working less than 20 hours a week. Indeed, this time limit has resulted in over a million people losing SNAP benefits in 2016 alone—not based on whether they still need assistance, but because of arbitrary time limits. Further, states are not required to provide job training slots, so some of these vulnerable people lose food assistance even if they are looking for work, but cannot find a job. That is a problem Congress should be trying to fix, not worsen.

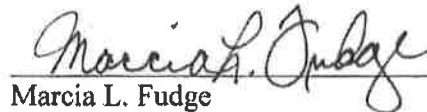
Far too many Americans continue to struggle with food insecurity in the United States, and we must preserve the dignity and health of the most vulnerable among us through the basic and reliable food assistance provided by SNAP. We strongly urge you to maintain the entitlement structure of SNAP and reject any attempts to further cut funding or place additional burdens on those looking to access these modest benefits.

Thank you for considering our additional views. We look forward to working with you and with Members of the Committee on the Budget on this critical issue.

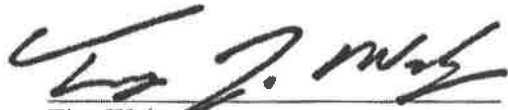
Sincerely,



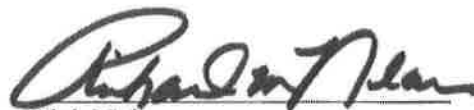
James P. McGovern
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Nutrition
Committee on Agriculture



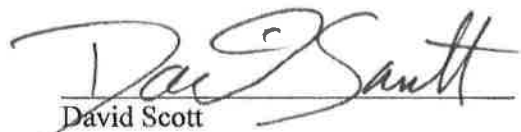
Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



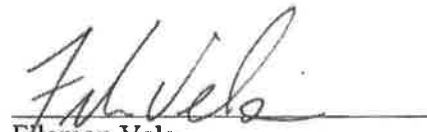
Tim Walz
Member of Congress



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