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Dear Farm Bill Conferees,

We are writing to express our support for preventing harmful cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill. SNAP, known as Cal Fresh in California, is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides essential nutrition benefits to working families, children, senior citizens, and disabled individuals in every state and town in our country. In the City of Oakland, there are 33,747 households receiving SNAP/Cal Fresh benefits. On average, these families would see a reduction in benefits of nearly \$300 per year. The State of California has the highest number of SNAP eligible households in the Country and 4.2 million Californians are Cal Fresh recipients.

While we support efforts to improve the integrity of the SNAP program, we encourage conferees to reject all SNAP eligibility changes designed to erect new barriers to participation, preventing millions of seniors, children and families from accessing food assistance. The eligibility changes also will mean an additional 280,000 children would lose free school meals because children in SNAP households are automatically eligible for school meals. The current bill also threatens to limit the eligibility of childless adults and ex-felons from receiving benefits.

Changes would also increase administrative costs by requiring states to re-determine eligibility for SNAP, even if a household was deemed eligible for other state and/or federal assistance programs.

The economic benefits of SNAP/Cal Fresh have broad benefits for the local economy. Every dollar in new SNAP/Cal Fresh benefits generates approximately \$1.70 in economic activity. It is also estimated that 16 cents for each dollar spent goes back to the farmers.

Please consider the needs of these struggling families, children, and senior citizens as you negotiate the final Farm Bill and the future of the SNAP program.

Please see the attached resolution expressing opposition to such cuts in benefits and eligibility, which was approved by the Oakland City Council on Tuesday, November 19, 2013.

Respectfully Submitted,

Councilmember Lynette Gibson McElhaney
City of Oakland, District 3