



July 10, 2012

The Honorable Marcia L. Fudge
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: (202) 225-1339

Dear Congresswoman Fudge:

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks and Ohio Grocers Association are writing to express our deep thanks for your leadership and support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We are sending this letter to share with you our strong concerns with the proposals to cut or make harmful changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as part of the 2012 Farm Bill.

As the Committee continues its work on a Farm bill package, we fully understand the tough choices the Committee may need to make to help ease the overall budget deficit, but we urge you to strive for a bipartisan, balanced approach.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks and the Ohio Grocers Association urge the Committee to retain and strengthen SNAP, which keeps hunger at bay for over 1.8 million low-income families and elder residents in Ohio. While farming provides nearly one of out every seven jobs in Ohio, our state is still struggling with high unemployment and underemployment. Over one in four Ohio children lives with a daily risk of hunger. The most recent Census poverty statistics show that the poverty rate is at its second highest point in 45 years. Millions of families in America are still struggling in this economy. The Lucas-Peterson Farm Bill proposal ignores that reality and would leave low-income families worse off.

Due to the recent economic collapse, SNAP usage has significantly increased over the past few years. There are currently 46 million Americans receiving SNAP, representing a 76% increase over the 26 million who were on the program in 2007. Since the 2008 recession began, Ohio alone has added approximately 775,000 new SNAP cases, all based on need in this difficult economic time.

The program not only works to efficiently put food on the tables for millions of Ohioans, it also creates and retains jobs as the monthly \$253 million in SNAP benefits flows through local Ohio economies alone. SNAP is an important public-private partnership. SNAP benefits are spent in local communities at businesses ranging from local grocers to farmers markets. Cutting SNAP doesn't just hurt the poor, it hurts business too. SNAP benefits are one of the fastest, most effective forms of economic stimulus because they get money into the economy quickly. SNAP helps maintain demand for food during slow economic periods. Moody's Analytics estimates that in a weak economy, every \$1 increase in SNAP benefits generates \$1.72 in economic activity. Also, the Congressional Budget Office rated an increase in SNAP benefits as one of the two most cost-effective of all spending and tax options for boosting growth and jobs in a weak economy. Ohio's grocers do the majority of their business during the first 10 days of the month when SNAP benefits are distributed. Frankly, these SNAP dollars never go unused; rather, folks eagerly await each month's distribution to help feed their families.

Cutting SNAP like this isn't sensible when you consider who SNAP helps. The \$16.5 billion proposed SNAP cut that is in this bill would primarily hit low-wage working families with children and low-income elderly and disabled individuals. Nearly 75% of SNAP participants are in families with children and more than 25% of participants are in households with seniors or people with disabilities. Families on SNAP are also working - nearly half of all SNAP households with children have earned income. These families are struggling to put food on the table and their lives will be that much more difficult if their SNAP benefits are reduced. This cut means that less food will be available to nourish poor children so that they can reach their full potential in school each day, and it is less food to help keep the disabled and the elderly healthy and strong.

SNAP is one of the most efficient and effective governmental programs we have. Its error rates stand at record lows; fewer than two percent of SNAP benefits are issued to households that do not meet all of the program's eligibility requirements. This is hardly a program that needs to be trimmed back because of waste, fraud, or abuse.

The SNAP program has received strong bipartisan support because of its effectiveness in ensuring the poorest and hungriest people in our nation can put food on the table, including recommendations of support from the Simpson-Bowles and Domenici-Rivlin Commissions. The program was also protected from sequestration during last summer's budget deal. Policymakers who crafted previous bipartisan deficit reduction proposals have followed a principle of not increasing poverty or hardship to reduce the deficit. This Farm Bill violates that principle; there is no question that millions of Americans will be harmed by the SNAP cuts in this proposal.

The Senate has already rejected previous proposals to scale back categorical eligibility, which comprises the bulk of the SNAP cut in the Lucas-Peterson proposal. When the Bush Administration proposed this cut at one point, Congress rejected it on a bipartisan basis. And in the past year alone, the Senate has twice voted on a bipartisan basis to soundly reject eliminating this option.

We urge the Committee to fully reauthorize the SNAP program and avoid caps, harmful changes to categorical eligibility or reductions in funding or benefits.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks and Ohio Grocers Association stand ready to work with you to make the 2012 Farm Bill a success. We support a strong commitment to the nation's agriculture, rural communities, and struggling families. This is the time to strengthen, not weaken, our nation's food safety net and make sure no family goes hungry.

Should you have any questions regarding our position or would like additional information, please call Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, at 614-221-4336, ext. 222 or Nate Filler, President/CEO of the Ohio Grocers Association at 614-442-5511 ext 7130.

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