

**Farm Bill Comments to House MOCs Template**

Date

Address of your House MOCs

Re: **Ideas and proposals for the 2023 Farm Bill**

Dear Representative(s) [you may choose to address each member or all at once]:

On behalf of [your organization] and the community members we serve, we appreciate the opportunity to share 2023 Farm Bill recommendations to improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and systemically tackle hunger in the United States. The 2023 Farm Bill provides a key vehicle to strengthen SNAP and make it an even more effective food safety net for consumers who struggle with lower incomes.

[Provide a description of your organization, the mission, and the impact it has in your community. Also, feel free here or elsewhere in the letter to insert information about hunger in your community, data about SNAP in your state [https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap] and/or county, and any input/stories from people with lived experience with hunger and poverty. We have included SNAP talking points at the end of the letter for your reference.]

SNAP is an effective program that promotes food security, generates economic activity, and fosters well-being. SNAP responds quickly to increases in need, whether due to recessions, natural disasters, or pandemics. Significant gaps in SNAP benefit adequacy and equitable access, however, undermine its positive impacts. Indeed, SNAP benefits average a mere $6 per person, per day.

[Feel free to insert any examples of SNAP households struggling with tough choices between food and other basic needs.]

The 2023 Farm Bill should protect and strengthen SNAP. [You can find FRAC priorities at this link: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Priority-SNAP-Legislation_R3.pdf.> Feel free to include the link in your letter and/or to cite particular provisions that your organization supports.]

Specifically, we urge Congress to:

**Make SNAP benefits adequate.** The Close the Meal Gap Act (H.R. 3037/S. 1336) would improve SNAP benefit amounts by basing SNAP benefits on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Low-Cost Food Plan instead of the bare bones Thrifty Food Plan; by boosting the minimum SNAP monthly benefit amount, which currently is only $23; by taking into account all of a household’s excess shelter costs in determining their SNAP benefits, and by streamlining states’ use of a Standard Medical Expense Deduction. These changes can ease the untenable choices too many families with children have to make between paying for food or paying for shelter, and that too many older adults and people with disabilities must make between paying for food or paying for medicine.

[Feel free to include any local examples on any of the priorities.]

**End SNAP time limits.** The Improving Access to Nutrition Act (H.R. 1510) would end the three-month time limits on SNAP eligibility for certain unemployed and underemployed adults who cannot document sufficient work hours. Time limits take food off the tables of many unemployed and underemployed people struggling in the labor market.

Enacted in 1996, the current time limit law affects vulnerable individuals ages 18–50 in many circumstances, including veterans, youth aging out of foster care, individuals reentering the workforce after incarceration, and chronically unhoused individuals. Some adults who fall subject to the time limit have underlying mental and physical health problems that are difficult to document. Moreover, while many of the people subject to the time limits have connections to the labor market, they either cannot find jobs or get too few hours of work in the jobs they do have.

The SNAP time limits are harsh and arbitrary, fail to address labor market issues, and exacerbate racial inequities. Research indicates that time limits do not lead to a meaningful increase in employment but do reduce SNAP participation. Given SNAP’s effectiveness in improving economic stability, food security, health, and well-being, time-limiting SNAP benefits is counterproductive. [[1]](#footnote-2)

**Improve SNAP access for low income college students** The Enhance Access to SNAP Act (EATS Act) (H.R. 3183) would drop the extra work requirements that full-time college students face in qualifying for SNAP. The inequitable SNAP student access barriers are difficult for state agencies to administer and are confusing for students and institutions of higher education.

**Improve equitable access for SNAP consumers.** End the prohibition on use of SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods from food retailers.

**Close SNAP Gaps.** Access to food is a basic human right. Current gaps in SNAP coverage disadvantage some populations and undermine our nation’s ability to end hunger. The Farm Bill also should repeal the lifetime ban on SNAP for individuals with a past felony drug conviction, lift the five-year residency bar to SNAP for documented immigrant adults, and make pathways for SNAP for residents of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Island.

Thank you again for seeking input on 2023 Farm Bill priorities.

Sincerely,

[your organization]

**Sample Talking Points on Food Insecurity**

 **SNAP Benefits Improve Food Security**

SNAP remains the most effective anti-hunger program in the U.S. During the pandemic, SNAP responded efficiently and effectively to the food needs for many households with low incomes. SNAP serves people of all ages and all types of communities — rural, urban, and suburban. Four in five SNAP households (81 percent) have a child, a person age 60 or older, or a person with disabilities.[[2]](#endnote-1) SNAP also has positive economic impacts. Each $1 In SNAP during a downturn generates between $1.50 and $1.80 in economic activity that is felt throughout the food chain — from farmers and ranchers, food manufacturers, and truckers, to grocers and store employees.[[3]](#endnote-2)And SNAP is an important support for workers who are paid low wages and for those looking for work. Most SNAP participants who can work do so.

The detrimental and lifelong consequences of childhood poverty and resulting hunger are well documented. The toxic stress of living in poverty has negative, life-long impacts on a child’s brain development. When children live in poverty, they endure hardships that impair their ability to thrive,[[4]](#endnote-3) and it impacts their capacity to learn, develop, and thrive as children and throughout their lives.[[5]](#endnote-4) Children are less likely to succeed in school and at home, and poverty increases the likelihood that childhood impairments will result in adult dependency on safety net services.[[6]](#endnote-5) Ultimately, poverty damages a child’s chance for economic security as an adult and fuels an intergenerational cycle of poverty: Children who are born in poverty are three times as likely to be poor at age 40 than children not born in poverty.[[7]](#endnote-6)

SNAP has a critical role in improving the health of people across the nation, especially among the most vulnerable Americans. SNAP makes a positive difference over the life course of individuals, decreasing negative health outcomes in children and increasing economic self-sufficiency in women.

Hunger persists in America. In 2021, more than 33.8 million Americans lived in households that struggled against food insecurity[[8]](#endnote-7), and more than one in six people in America turned to the charitable food sector for help.[[9]](#endnote-8) In early February 2023, 11.4 percent of respondent households reported that they “sometimes” or “often” do not have enough to eat in the past seven days.[[10]](#endnote-9)

In October 2021, the regular SNAP benefit increased by 21 percent due to USDA’s fulfillment of the 2018 Farm Bill mandate to update the Thrifty Food Plan.[[11]](#endnote-10) The evidence-based update resulted in a meaningful but modest adjustment on SNAP benefits. Nonetheless, the adjustment to the most meager of the federal government’s food plans leaves it far short of the amount needed for families to keep food on the table throughout the month. Substituting the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for calculating SNAP benefits is warranted and long overdue.

[i] See “Characteristics of U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2020,” USDA, November 2022, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Characteristics2020-Summary.pdf>

[ii] See Patrick Canning and Brian Stacy, “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier,” USDA Economic Research Service, July 2019, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/93529/err-265.pdf?v=2789.4> (relevant research summarized at Table 1, p.7)

[iii] “Family Poverty, Welfare Reform, and Child Development.” Greg J. Duncan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn Source: Child Development, Vol. 71, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2000), pp. 188-196. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1132232>.

[iv] Duncan, G and Magnuson, K. 2011. The Long Reach of Childhood Poverty. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/_media/pdf/pathways/winter_2011/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf>.

[v] Barton, Paul E, and Richard J Coley. The Family: America's Smallest School. Policy Information Report, Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 2007, and Berliner, David C. Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit, 2009.

[vi] Cuddy, E., Venator, J. and Reeves, R. 2015. In a land of dollars: Deep poverty and its consequences. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/in-a-land-of-dollars-deep-poverty-and-itsconsequences/>.

[vii] Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh, USDA Economic Research Service, September 2022, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=5832.6>

[viii] Poonam Gupta, Julio Salas, and Elaine Waxman, “Two Years into the Pandemic, Charitable Food Remains a Key Resource for One in Six Adults,” Urban Institute, May 2022, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Two%20Years%20into%20the%20Pandemic%2C%20Charitable%20Food%20Remains%20a%20Key%20Resource%20for%20One%20in%20Six%20Adults.pdf>

[ix] See “Week 54 Household Pulse Survey: February 1 - February 13,” U.S. Census Bureau, February 22, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp54.html> (based on data reported at Food Sufficiency and Food Security Table 1)

[x] USDA, SNAP, and the Thrifty Food Plan. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/thriftyfoodplan>

1. [https://frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-public-health-role-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-improving-health-well%e2%80%90being-americans](https://frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-public-health-role-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-improving-health-well%E2%80%90being-americans)

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104451/the-impact-of-snap-able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawd-time-limit-reinstatement-in-nin_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See “Characteristics of U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2020,” USDA, November 2022, https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Characteristics2020-Summary.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
3. See Patrick Canning and Brian Stacy, “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier,” USDA Economic Research Service, July 2019, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/93529/err-265.pdf?v=2789.4> (relevant research summarized at Table 1, p.7). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
4. “Family Poverty, Welfare Reform, and Child Development.” Greg J. Duncan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn Source: Child Development, Vol. 71, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2000), pp. 188-196. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1132232. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
5. Duncan, G and Magnuson, K. 2011. The Long Reach of Childhood Poverty. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/_media/pdf/pathways/winter_2011/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
6. Barton, Paul E, and Richard J Coley. The Family: America's Smallest School. Policy Information Report, Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 2007, and Berliner, David C. Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
7. Cuddy, E., Venator, J. and Reeves, R. 2015. In a land of dollars: Deep poverty and its consequences. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/in-a-land-of-dollars-deep-poverty-and-itsconsequences/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
8. Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh, USDA Economic Research Service, September 2022, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=5832.6> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
9. Poonam Gupta, Julio Salas, and Elaine Waxman, “Two Years into the Pandemic, Charitable Food Remains a Key Resource for One in Six Adults,” Urban Institute, May 2022, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Two%20Years%20into%20the%20Pandemic%2C%20Charitable%20Food%20Remains%20a%20Key%20Resource%20for%20One%20in%20Six%20Adults.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
10. See “Week 54 Household Pulse Survey: February 1 - February 13,” U.S. Census Bureau, February 22, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp54.html> (based on data reported at Food Sufficiency and Food Security Table 1). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
11. USDA, SNAP, and the Thrifty Food Plan. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/thriftyfoodplan> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)