

September XX, 2018

Dear Farm Bill Conferees:

We strongly urge Congress to protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by rejecting any cuts to SNAP, adopting the Senate Farm Bill SNAP provisions in the conference agreement on the Farm Bill, and considering ways to improve SNAP benefit adequacy.

SNAP is this nation's first line of defense against hunger, putting food on the table, as of May 2018, for some 39 million individuals. In FY 2016; 84 percent of SNAP benefits went to households with a child, an older adult, or a person with a disability. Most SNAP participants who can work do work.

SNAP promotes food security, enhances health outcomes, improves child development and learning, promotes employment, lifts households above the poverty line, provides a bridge for households facing temporary setbacks, and stimulates local economic activity. Research demonstrates that SNAP benefits struggling households, communities, and agricultural and retail economies. Yet SNAP's positive impacts are limited by the very low levels at which SNAP benefits are set. SNAP benefits average a mere \$1.40 per person per meal. It is crucial that the Farm Bill protect and strengthen SNAP.

We support the Senate Farm Bill provisions that protect SNAP eligibility and allow for procedural streamlining. The Senate bill would continue to allow states to screen families with modest gross incomes between 130 percent and 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level to determine if they have expenses such as housing and childcare that would make them qualify for a benefit under SNAP's net income threshold. By contrast, the House bill would end that broad-based categorical eligibility option, eliminating SNAP benefits for nearly one million people and exacerbating the "cliff effect" when workers earn more. According to CBO, 265,000 children in these SNAP households would also lose access to free school meals.

The Senate bill would continue to allow states to coordinate SNAP with low-income home energy assistance programs. By contrast, the House bill would remove that streamlining option, thereby adding red tape and cutting SNAP benefits for many people struggling to afford to both heat and eat.

The Senate bill allows states to certify SNAP eligibility for certain elderly and disabled adults without earned income for up to 36 months. This is a sensible procedural improvement that will allow states to more seamlessly serve those vulnerable populations.

The Senate bill supports work by building on current SNAP work provisions and Employment and Training (E&T) demonstrations. In particular, it would add funding for and allow additional states to participate in SNAP E&T pilot programs that were implemented in the 2014 Farm Bill. This would enable greater opportunities to secure thorough evaluations and data regarding which approaches lead to jobs and better employment. By contrast, the House bill would extend a harsh SNAP requirement for steady

weekly hours of work to older adults (aged 50 to 60 as well as aged 18 to 50) and to parents with dependent children aged six or older. The House proposal exacerbates a SNAP benefit time limit that should be repealed, provides inadequate funding to ensure sufficient quality training slots, and risks loss of food benefits by millions of needy people.

The Senate bill maintains current law that allows only merit-based, state personnel to make SNAP eligibility determinations. The House bill would allow eligibility decisions and other administrative functions to be made by for-profit private contractors. This would result in inexperienced workers making determinations on often complex SNAP cases, compromising access to food assistance for vulnerable people.

One disconcerting provision in the Senate Farm Bill eliminates bonuses to those states with improved SNAP participation and payment accuracy. We believe that these bonuses have strengthened the integrity and reach of the program and encouraged states to improve SNAP in these respects.

The House Farm Bill would cut approximately \$20 billion in SNAP food benefits over ten years, thereby taking food off the tables of millions of needy people. Local economies could be harmed as well. SNAP's multiplier effect is critically important during economic downturns as each \$1 in federally-financed SNAP food benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity. The House Farm Bill SNAP cuts would negatively impact not only consumers but community economies, farmers, retailers and other food system producers.

Now is a time to protect and strengthen SNAP. Congress should reject the House's harmful SNAP provisions and any cuts to SNAP, adopt the Senate Farm Bill SNAP provisions, and look for additional opportunities in the weeks and months ahead to make SNAP benefit levels more adequate.

Signers as of Wednesday, September 5 at 10 AM (Deadline: Friday, September 7)

1,000 Days

A Place at the Table

Alliance to End Hunger

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Commodity Distribution Association (ACDA)

American Medical Student Association

American Psychological Association

American Public Health Association

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Center for Community Change Action

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Child Care Aware of America

Children's Hunger Alliance

Coalition on Human Needs

Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces

D.C. Hunger Solutions

End Hunger Network

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Fair Food Network
Farmers Market Coalition
Feeding America
Food & Water Watch
Food Policy Action
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
FoodCorps
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Health Care for America Now
Hispanic Federation
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
Islamic Relief USA
Justice in Aging
Main Street Alliance
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Co+op Grocers
National Council on Aging
National CSFP Association
National Education Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Immigration Law Center
National Indian Council on Aging
National League of Cities
National Urban League
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK
Oxfam America
PolicyLink
Progressive Doctors
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union
Sierra Club
The Children's Advocacy Institute
The Jewish Federations of North America
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Church of Christ
Voices for Progress