

August 16, 2018

Honorable Pat Roberts
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Mike Conaway
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Collin Peterson
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Bldg
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Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, Chairman Conaway, & Ranking Member Peterson,

As public health and medical experts, our first-hand experience in communities across our country has made us acutely aware of the threats that food insecurity and extreme inequality pose to our nation's health.

The Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), which sets the vast majority of food and farm policy in this country, should ensure that our country has a world-class food system that makes affordable, healthy food available to everyone. Yet the House version of H.R. 2 abandons evidence for ideology by reducing and even eliminating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for millions of families.

The House's proposed changes to SNAP would only add to a growing public health crisis. In recent years, preventable diet-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes have reached epidemic proportions, threatening not only our health, but our economic vitality and national security.^{1, 2, 3} Health care costs related to diagnosed diabetes amount to \$245 billion annually, and the overall costs associated with cardiovascular disease due to health care cost and loss of productivity total \$320 billion annually.⁴

SNAP—as the nation's foremost nutrition assistance program—is a critically important and proven effective resource for families and individuals in urban and rural communities who struggle to afford enough food to eat. Yet, through a combination of extreme new work requirements and severe penalties, the House version of H.R. 2 would cut billions of dollars from SNAP and leave millions of households to face the devastating consequences of food insecurity and economic instability. The House bill disregards data showing that most SNAP participants who can work do work and offers untested and underfunded workforce training programs as compensation—an empty solution to a problem that doesn't exist.⁵

In the immediate short term, the only path to avoid further exacerbating a public health crisis is to fully adopt the SNAP provisions in the Senate version of H.R. 2. Long term, we must continue to seek evidence-based policy solutions that address the root causes of hunger to ensure everyone in this country has the opportunity to grow and thrive.

Sincerely,

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2017. Unfit to Serve, Obesity is Impacting National Security. Online at <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/unfit-to-serve.pdf>

² CDC. 2016. High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet. Online at www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_bloodpressure.htm, accessed March 1, 2018.

³ CDC. 2017. Health, United States, 2016. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Online at www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus16.pdf, accessed March 28, 2018.

⁴ CDC. 2017. National diabetes statistics report, 2017. Atlanta, GA. Online at www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/data/statistics/national-diabetes-statistics-report.pdf, accessed March 28, 2018.

⁵ Carlson, S., Rosenbaum, D., & Keith-Jennings, B. 2016. Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016? Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Online at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/who-are-the-low-income-childless-adults-facing-the-loss-of-snap-in-2016>.

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