Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson:

Millions of American families are working, but still don’t earn enough to put food on the table and pay for other necessities such as rent, transportation, child care or health care. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital, short-term lifeline that keeps food on the table for more than 40 million Americans including children, seniors and veterans. As Congress debates the future of SNAP in Farm Bill reauthorization, we urge you to support the bipartisan provisions outlined in the Senate’s Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 that preserve and improve SNAP. We encourage you to include the Senate’s bipartisan SNAP provisions in the final Farm Bill conference report.

United Way works with businesses, individuals, community partners and policymakers to help people find better jobs, get a good education, and stay healthy. We know we are better off when our neighbors have food on the table, a roof over their heads and gas in their cars to get to work. But too many families — including children, seniors, veterans, working families and people with disabilities — struggle to make ends meet. SNAP makes targeted, temporary support available to Americans in every state and district in times of hardship. Americans receiving SNAP are the people who need it the most; in fact, the USDA finds that 87 percent of SNAP households include children, seniors and people with disabilities. SNAP makes food accessible to hungry families more cost-effectively and at a scale that no independent nonprofit can match.

That’s why United Way appreciates the bipartisan provisions in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 that preserve what works for SNAP, make sensible changes that support employers and workers, and improve program integrity. In particular, United Way supports:

**Maintaining existing eligibility rules and work requirements:** We agree that there is dignity in work, and with the goal of ensuring able-bodied individuals can move themselves into the middle class—but in many communities, finding a job doesn’t happen overnight or even in one month. SNAP supports Americans who work hard but still can’t make ends meet, and people who have their hours cut or lose their jobs through no fault of their own. By preserving current rules around eligibility and work, the Senate Farm Bill maintains state flexibility and ensures that children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities and working families will be able to put food on the table.
Supporting employers and workers with improvements to SNAP E&T: We know that even with low unemployment, there is a major mismatch between worker job skills and the needs of employers. And with United Way’s experience on the ground leading and supporting jobs initiatives, we also know that cross-sector collaboration and sector-based partnerships create new, lasting solutions that help connect workers to high-demand jobs that can support them and their families. The Senate Bill represents a move in the right direction. The bill better aligns state SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) programs to meet employer needs by connecting agencies with state workforce development boards and local employers. Additionally, the Senate bill ensures SNAP E&T is better equipped to help workers develop skills by having state SNAP E&Ts offer services beyond solely job search assistance, and connecting SNAP participants to employers and nonprofit organizations that provide high-quality training or work experiences. Finally, the Senate Bill makes incremental steps to build on and incorporate evidenced-based practices by applying what works from the 2014 SNAP E&T pilots and providing funding for additional SNAP E&T pilots to support workers over age 50, formerly incarcerated individuals and individuals recovering from substance abuse.

Commonsense measures that improve program integrity: SNAP has a strong track-record with more than 96 percent of SNAP benefits issued accurately because of the program’s rigorous system to determine eligibility. The Senate Farm Bill builds on success through administrative measures that would establish a database to prevent duplication of benefits across state lines and pilot methods to improve verifying earned income.

United Way applauds the Senate’s bipartisan provisions that preserve and improve SNAP. As the Senate and House proceed with upcoming votes and negotiations, United Way encourages the House to adopt the bipartisan Senate SNAP provisions, that Senators oppose negative amendments to the SNAP provisions, and ultimately that the bipartisan Senate SNAP provisions are included in the final Farm Bill conference report.

Thank you for your consideration and continued efforts to fight hunger and support workers across our nation.

Steve Taylor
Senior Vice President and Counsel for Public Policy
United Way Worldwide