



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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May 15, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Coalition on Human Needs (CHN), I write to strongly urge you to vote no on H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018. The provisions affecting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in H.R. 2 are extremely harmful, resulting in loss of food to over two million people, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The [members of CHN](#), representing millions of service providers, people of faith, policy experts and advocates on behalf of low-income people, understand the importance of SNAP to families, seniors, children, and people with disabilities. We know that the attempt in this legislation to require documentation of more hours of work is based on a profound misunderstanding of the low-wage labor market in this nation, and of the struggles of millions of workers to make ends meet. Further, repealing the state option to apply categorical eligibility will create a benefit cliff, denying SNAP benefits to more than 400,000 households (included in the more than two million people who will lose assistance), mostly families with children, in which workers manage to earn a little over SNAP's gross income limit.

More than 80 percent of the households utilizing SNAP include workers who have been employed within a year of receiving benefits. A number of factors stand in the way of more steady work. Many employers do not offer anywhere close to full-time hours, but require their workers to be on call, thereby preventing them from adding hours at another job. Some are prevented from steady work because they are caring for a child or other family member with disabilities; others cannot afford regular child care for a young child. Some contend with their own illnesses or disabling conditions without meeting the stringent tests to qualify for SSI or SSDI.

SNAP benefits are a lifeline for families with low earnings. We know the value of these benefits: in 2012, [SNAP lifted 10.3 million people out of poverty](#), including 4.9 million children. [Research](#) that tracked the differences between young children who received SNAP and similar children who did not found that in adulthood, those who had received SNAP before the age of five were 18 percent more likely to have completed high school, 16 percent less likely to be obese, and 5 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease. Therefore, changes that will result in the loss of SNAP to families with children will have dangerous consequences to their children's health and economic prospects – that alone is reason to vote against this legislation.

H.R. 2 seems to assume that people who do not really need nutrition assistance receive it for extended periods. But the facts are otherwise: half of all individuals and nearly two-thirds of adults without disabilities receive SNAP benefits for one year or less.

We have long supported programs and policies that can help low-income workers get and keep jobs with better pay, regular hours, and decent benefits. The SNAP provisions in H.R. 2 not only do not provide the resources to help workers make these gains; instead the bill will make them harder to provide. Congress in 2013 established SNAP employment and training demonstration projects that were

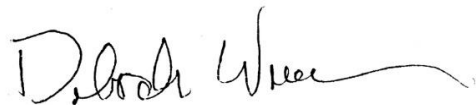
later awarded in 10 states: California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. Instead of waiting for the results of these pilots, H.R. 2 would end them. Instead of targeting meaningful training and related supports to workers who could most benefit from them, this bill squanders billions of dollars by setting up a large new bureaucracy to track work hours and committing only \$30 per person per month for work or training programs. Effective training programs cost between \$7,500 and \$14,000 per person.

Workers will not be more likely to secure steady, above-poverty wages if they and their children do not have a minimally adequate diet. SNAP as a needed supplement plus a real investment in effective and targeted jobs programs can help workers make real gains. H.R. 2 instead sets up roadblocks to receiving food assistance without providing meaningful help with work.

The legislation requires monthly documentation of work hours. Requiring this much red tape will result in families and individuals losing assistance, ***even if they are working*** – they will not always be able to supply the needed proof, or get it to the SNAP office by the monthly deadline.

Across the nation, in suburbs, rural areas, and cities, people make use of SNAP benefits because they are either unable to work or earn too little to make ends meet. H.R. 2 would deny \$23 billion in assistance to 2 million people. In 2028, according to CBO, 62 percent of those losing aid will be in households with children; most of the remaining include people aged 50-59. Compounding the loss, CBO estimates that in an average year, 265,000 children will lose access to free school meals. Depriving low-income people of needed help and instead plowing billions into bureaucracy and work programs too minimal to be effective is unconscionably wasteful and harmful. Please reject this approach and vote against H.R. 2.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Weinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah Weinstein
Executive Director