



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Alarming SNAP Policies in the Republican Farm Bill

The farm bill, which sets policies for most of the nation's agriculture programs, is due for reauthorization this year. While historically a bipartisan endeavor, last month House Agriculture Committee Republicans reported, on a party line vote, a reckless and cold-hearted proposal that cuts vital nutrition assistance for families struggling to put food on the table. At the same time, new requirements in the bill would potentially lead to the waste of billions of taxpayer dollars.

SNAP and the Farm Bill

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) combats food insecurity for more than 40 million Americans. Nearly two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, elderly, or individuals with disabilities. The majority of recipients who can work, do work. SNAP helps children do better in school and parents put food on the table when they earn low wages, work unsteady hours or are between jobs. The approved retailers who accept SNAP foster a strong public-private partnership by serving communities and nearly doubling the economic impact of each dollar spent.

Despite the benefits of SNAP, the Republican farm bill would massively disrupt the current program, forcing millions to face benefit cuts or lose benefits entirely. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the government will essentially save no money over the next ten years under the GOP farm bill, but two million Americans would see their benefits lowered or disappear completely.

Irresponsible Changes to SNAP

Worse yet – the proposed farm bill goes after the SNAP program by pushing a series of irresponsible and harmful policies.

- **Eliminates broad-based categorical eligibility** — SNAP currently allows – and 42 states take advantage of – the ability to standardize eligibility across social service programs. This reduces the administrative burden on states and families and improves the delivery of benefits. The farm bill ends the current process and replaces it with a more limiting policy – causing 400,000 households to lose their benefits and 265,000 students to lose their school lunches while increasing administrative burdens.

- **Wastes billions of dollars with burdensome child support requirements** — Currently, states have the option of making custodial and non-custodial parents ineligible for SNAP for failure to cooperate in pursuing or paying child support. Only five states and Guam currently use that option. The farm bill, however, makes this ineligibility a requirement for all states, greatly increasing the administrative burden on states already effectively enforcing child support payments. In a supposed attempt to hold parents accountable this provision ultimately punishes children by taking away a source of food for their entire family. As a result, CBO estimates that the federal government will spend \$7.2 billion to administer this provision in order to save \$3.8 billion through reduced benefits for SNAP recipients.

- **Expects SNAP recipients to find jobs through untested workforce program or lose benefits** — Even though SNAP already has strict work requirements, the new farm bill imposes harsh new work requirements with punitive lock-out periods that only serve to take food away from vulnerable families. Republicans claim a new workforce program will make sure individuals receive a job, but in reality, their bill only creates a new, untested, and likely underfunded program.
 - Currently, 10 states are using \$200 million to test a variety of bipartisan approaches to improving SNAP employment and training services. However, for all their claims of “evidence-based” policymaking, Republicans do not want to wait to see what works and what does not. Instead, their farm bill cuts nearly \$9.2 billion from current SNAP recipients in order to divert \$7.7 billion to a workforce program that has not been proven effective, potentially leaving recipients with no job and no way to put food on the table.

 - While the law requires this new program be up and running by 2021, CBO estimates that even by 2028, one in five beneficiaries subject to new, stricter work requirements would not be able to access those services in their states.

In the end, the Republican farm bill would spend roughly the same amount of money to provide reduced benefits to fewer people. It does this while increasing administrative burdens and creating a new and untested program without any evidence showing these programs will help anyone find and sustain employment. It will leave more families hungry and no closer to improving their economic reality.