

Basic Needs

Cuts to SNAP will harm hungry Ohioans

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Federal food assistance feeds over 1.4 million Ohioans in over 700,000 households.¹ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is the nation's most effective anti-hunger program. Food aid, which reduces poverty and improves health for children and adults, is authorized through the federal Farm Bill. Congress reauthorizes food and agriculture programs every five years. Historically, reauthorization has been a bipartisan process and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle considered SNAP a crucial nutrition program as well as an important revenue source for businesses that accept it. This year Republican lawmakers are planning to make significant changes that will make it harder for hungry people to get the food they need and reduce business at local grocery stores. The House Agriculture Committee passed their version of the 2018 House Farm Bill along party lines. Charmain Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas) was the architect of the bill that proposes new restrictions to food aid that will increase hunger. The House Farm Bill would cut \$ 17 billion in SNAP benefit cuts over 10 years. These changes will make it harder for hungry families to eat. Below are key changes that will harm Ohioans struggling to make ends meet.

- **Increasing the age of adults subject to work requirement to 59 for those not raising children under six.** Increasing the working age for SNAP participants will increase hunger among older adults because they face additional challenges to finding employment.
- **Harsher penalties for not meeting work requirements.** Also, a working-age adult who doesn't meet the work requirement for one month would be made ineligible for SNAP benefits for 12 months and then for 36 months for subsequent violations. Provisions like this will harm unemployed workers who are trying to get back on their feet
- **Limiting categorical eligibility.** Categorical eligibility allows people who are recipients of other public benefits like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and supplemental security income to have a more streamlined process for qualifying for food assistance. Children who receive food assistance are categorically eligible for free and reduced school lunch. Eliminating categorical eligibility could make it harder for hungry children to qualify for free and reduced lunch resulting in thousands of children losing access to the program.
- **Making it harder for children to access food assistance.** The Chairman's proposal would require custodial and non-custodial parents to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement (CSE) in order to receive SNAP benefits. Under this proposal, custodial parents would be required to open a case for child support with CSE. If parents are not able to comply, a family's food benefit would be reduced.

¹ "Public Assistance Monthly Statistics Report." Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, January 2018 <https://bit.ly/2IHBOIL>

Recommendations:

Instead of passing a bill that makes it harder for low-wage working people, children, elderly people, people with disabilities and others to obtain healthy food, Congress should make it easier for people to get enough to eat. The Farm Bill should:

- **Prevent additional work requirements that would harm workers and make it harder for older adults to access food.** SNAP should be responsive to workers facing low wages, unpredictable scheduling and unemployment. Older adults with greater challenges to finding employment should not have their access to food cut.
- **Preserve access to waivers for high unemployment areas. SNAP provides an important safety net for unemployed and under-employed workers.** People should not be punished because their communities don't have enough good jobs.
- **Preserve categorical eligibility.** Do not create additional administrative barriers to accessing food assistance.
- **Maintain benefits for children.** Parents should not be required to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement to receive benefits because it unlikely to reduce food insecurity for children.