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**In Response to House Hearing on the Retailer Perspective on SNAP, Rep. McGovern Joined Small Businessman & Advocates to Discuss Unintended Consequences of Proposed USDA Rule Altering SNAP Requirements at Neighborhood Convenience Stores**

Click [HERE](#) for a recording of today's call.

Washington, DC— Following a House Agriculture Committee Hearing on the Retailers perspective on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits requirements, U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), a leading anti-hunger advocate, joined a neighborhood retailer from Massachusetts and an advocate from the Western Center on Law and Poverty on a press call today to discuss the hearing and numerous unintended consequences of a new rule, proposed by the USDA earlier this year.

The new USDA rule would alter the requirements for retail food stores to qualify for SNAP benefits. The rule is intended to encourage small retailers and neighborhood convenience stores to offer healthier meal options. However, it would limit accessibility to critical food sources and place undue burden on people that either depend on SNAP benefits to feed their families, or lack the transportation, physical ability, or time to travel to the nearest supermarket.

As proposed, the ruling would worsen the harmful effects of food deserts in inner-city and rural areas and severely limit food accessibility for people with disabilities, working mothers, veterans and other underserved populations who rely on SNAP benefits to feed themselves and their families.

“At today’s House Agriculture Committee hearing, both Republicans and Democrats raised concerns about the USDA’s proposed rule on retailer eligibility requirements for the SNAP program and how it could limit access to food for SNAP recipients,” **Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA) said.** “For many poor Americans, convenience stores are frequently the only source of groceries in their community, and in some cases, the only stores in their area that accept SNAP benefits. We would all love to have large supermarkets in every community, but that’s just not the reality. Additionally, many SNAP beneficiaries work non-traditional hours and

multiple jobs just to make ends meet. As a result, they have to shop for food when traditional grocers are closed and convenience stores are their only option.

“I’m deeply concerned the proposed USDA rule could force convenience stores out of the SNAP program and further limit access to food for our most vulnerable families. After today’s hearing, I’m convinced that changes need to be made to USDA’s proposal to ensure convenience stores and other smaller retailers are able to continue serving SNAP beneficiaries,” **McGovern added.** “The truth is, if we want to increase access to healthier foods, we should increase funding for SNAP to ensure beneficiaries can afford healthier foods, not limit access to food for families already struggling in poverty. I hope to work with the USDA to address these concerns so that no SNAP recipient is cut off from the food they need to feed their family.”

“We understand that the intention of the Farm Bill rule relating to stocking was intended to increase choices for low-income Americans who rely on the SNAP Program to prevent hunger, not reduce them. Too many people live in food deserts in America, both rural and urban, and they will be forced further into the sharp-edged corner of hunger and food insecurity if this rule is to move forward as drafted,” said **Jessica Bartholow, a Policy Advocate at the Western Center on Law and Poverty.** “We should be looking for solutions to reduce hunger in food deserts, but the proposed rule will only increase it. We join retailers and allies in the anti-hunger community in asking the USDA to reconsider the proposed regulations to prevent what will clearly be very harmful, perhaps unintended, consequences if implemented.”

Said **Dennis Lane, a 7-Eleven franchisee from Massachusetts,** “Convenience store owners feed the neighborhood. The kids that were catching the bus in front of my store in the 70’s are coming in to shop for their families now. Some of those folks are SNAP beneficiaries. Folks who have SNAP benefits may have other challenges, but single moms or elderly SNAP recipients who don’t have access to transportation and shop in the neighborhoods in which they live, are going to become collateral damage to this ruling—and that’s wrong. Folks who depend on SNAP benefits to feed their families should be focused on what they are going to make for dinner, not about where they are going to be allowed to buy dinner.”

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