



Response to the Draft House Farm Bill

April 12, 2018

Today, the Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, K. Michael Conaway (R-TX) made public his [official draft of the 2018 Farm Bill](#). The Chairman offered [a summary of the bill](#) at a press conference held this morning, remarking that there are 35 changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), American's most important anti-hunger program. Unfortunately, these proposals will only serve to increase hunger in America.

Over 40 Million Americans, [4 million of whom live in California](#), struggle to prevent hunger every day. SNAP, known as [CalFresh in California](#), is our country's most important defense against hunger. Still, the benefit SNAP provides, offers less than \$2.00 per meal, an amount that the [National Medical Association as less than what is needed to purchase a healthy diet](#). Because benefits are so low, nearly one-third of households that receive SNAP still must rely on food banks to meet their basic need for food.

The draft Farm Bill introduced today fails to address the fact that too many Americans eligible for SNAP don't receive it and, if they do, the monthly grant is not enough to prevent hunger. Instead, the legislation proposes to cut aid. It also seeks to punish out-of-work and under-employed Americans with increased hunger if they aren't working enough hours and do not participate in a workfare, or free work, program. The bill would erect new red-tape barriers to providing anti-hunger help to those who need it most and would hurt current SNAP recipients in [every California Congressional District, in rural](#) and [urban](#) communities alike.

Even if the bill is not enacted, as a policy statement, it is unhelpful and cruel. We believe that the draft farm bill intentionally contributes to and feeds off of harmful stereotypes of out-of-work and under-employed Americans. It does so while purporting to provide help to this very population. The question of how to support out-of-work and under-employed Americans in finding and keeping a job is one that deserves genuine attention. Because wages are the best defense against poverty, developing a policy agenda to support work as a means toward achieving self-sufficiency should be a Congressional top priority. We recommend, however, that rather than cutting SNAP anti-hunger help for working families and single adult job-seekers, which will only make them hungrier and less successful, Congress should look towards policy interventions already proven to achieve this goal. These include: raising the wage, guaranteeing paid sick time, establishing national paid family leave, preventing against workplace discrimination and harassment, adequately funding the Humphrey Hawkins Full Employment Act, adequately funding the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, fully funding the Temporary Aid to Needy Family (TANF) subsidized jobs programs, fully funding childcare for every working family that needs it and passing national health care law that extend Medicaid to all Americans. These are the policies we know can serve to better connect low-income Americans to work and economic prosperity.

If proposals to change SNAP are advanced in Congress, they should be ones aimed at reducing hunger. Western Center and the broad anti-hunger community [articulated policy proposals](#) at the outset of the 2018 Farm Bill discussions to achieve that goal. Several of those proposals were included in [H.R. 1276 \(Rep. Adams, Alma S. \[D-NC-12\]\)](#) which has over [100 Co-sponsors](#), including all but 10 members of California's Congressional Delegation. Many members of the state's Congressional Delegation also [signed a letter](#) urging the Chairman not to introduce a Farm Bill that punished out-of-work Americans with increased hunger.

There is no amount of hunger that makes a person better at work, or better at anything for that matter. The draft Farm Bill revealed today, if passed and signed, will increase hunger for children, families, people with disabilities, college students, and people who are elderly. It will also undermine jobs and our economy, [especially here in California](#) where the food industry is so important. We urge Congress to reject this proposal and to protect and strengthen SNAP benefits so we can get to the important work of preventing against hunger for all low-income people in America.

For more information about Western Center's Anti-Hunger work, please see our website at www.wclp.org, or contact: Jessica Bartholow at jbartholow@wclp.org or 916-282-5119.

For further commentary & opportunities to respond, please visit our national partners:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <https://www.cbpp.org/press/statements/greenstein-conaway-snap-proposals-would-increase-food-insecurity-and-hardship>

Center for Law and Social Policy: <https://www.clasp.org/press-room/press-releases/2018-farm-bill-would-place-children-families-and-seniors-enormous-risk>

Food Research and Action Center: <http://www.frac.org/news/not-broken-fix-draft-farm-bill-puts-unnecessary-burdens-low-income-people>

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger: <https://mazon.org/inside-mazon/2018-farm-bill-will-harm-real-people>

RESULTS Educational Fund offers a citizen action tool to respond to the draft farm bill: <http://www.results.org/take-action/action-center?vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f54035%2frespond>

For data about SNAP and who it serves in California, visit:

California Budget and Policy Center – SNAP By Congressional District: <http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/calfresh-reduces-hunger-every-congressional-district-california-face-deep-federal-cuts/>

Food Research and Action Center – SNAP Database: <http://www.frac.org/research/resource-library/state-of-the-states-interactive-tables>