

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814

May 8, 2018

California Congressional Delegation
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear California Congressional Delegation:

We are writing to express our concerns about the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), which was passed by the House Agriculture Committee on April 18 and is awaiting action by the full House.

The House farm bill proposes to cut benefits to working families with high child care expenses. It would shorten the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) three-month time limit imposed on adults without dependents to one month and apply it to a broader group of people, including older adults and families with children.

While savings are scored to some of the harsher provisions, the resulting hunger and harm to the economy they would cause are too high a price to pay for families who would lose eligibility or have their food benefits reduced. In particular, schoolchildren may lose access to free lunches, which is often their only balanced meal of the day. The bill levies harsh sanctions—including up to 36 months of ineligibility for benefits—for a one-time lack of compliance with work requirements. Congress should be strengthening, not weakening, national anti-hunger programs.

Hunger threatens the health, well-being, and self-sufficiency of Americans of all ages in urban and rural communities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service reports that 42 million individuals nationwide—including 13 million children—experience food insecurity. In California, one-quarter of children live at or near the poverty line and one in five children live in food-insecure households.

Approximately 4 million Californians receive USDA SNAP benefits. There are residents benefiting from food support in every California congressional district.¹ Yet local food pantries and congregate meal programs report they are still unable to meet the need that currently exists. The incidence of hunger would be far worse were it not for SNAP, known as CalFresh in California. SNAP is both cost-effective and efficient. Food benefits are targeted to the most vulnerable households, with 74 percent of SNAP participants residing in families with children, 6 percent in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities, and half in working families.

In addition to preventing hunger and mitigating some of the worst outcomes of poverty, SNAP strengthens communities and benefits retailers that depend on consumers spending their SNAP benefits. The USDA's research arm has estimated a multiplier of SNAP benefits on gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.79. An increase of \$1 billion in SNAP benefits increases GDP by \$1.79 billion and results in an increase of 8,900 to 17,900 full-time equivalent jobs. Making cuts to SNAP will result in fewer jobs, especially in communities such as those throughout California that rely on farming and food production industries.

The House farm bill contains provisions that would restrict the state's ability to enact regulations that are more protective than the federal framework and would invalidate dozens of state laws and requirements that protect our food supply and agricultural products. The King amendment, which was adopted at the markup of the bill by the House Agriculture Committee, also would invalidate many of California's invasive pest programs, as well as the ability to further restrict the harmful effects of pesticides. The undersigned share the concerns of California Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross regarding this threat to California and the nation's food supply, which are outlined in a detailed letter dated January 18, 2018.

We are asking California's Congressional Delegation to reject all proposals in the House farm bill that would result in reduced food assistance and weaker environmental protections to Californians.

¹ <http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/calfresh-reduces-hunger-every-congressional-district-california-face-deep-federal-cuts/>.

Sincerely,



Toni G. Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
California State Senate



Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly



Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget and
Fiscal Review Committee



Philip Y. Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget
Committee



Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Subcommittee 3 on
Health and Human Services



Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget
Subcommittee 1 on Health and
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Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Human Services
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Blanca E. Rubio
Chair, Assembly Human
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