



House Resolution 2 Will Increase Hunger in California

May 2, 2018

House Resolution 2, the 2018 Farm Bill,¹ released by Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, K. Michael Conaway (R-TX), at the beginning of April and passed out of the House Committee on Agriculture on April 18th, would make significant changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)² and increase hunger across the country.

Food insecurity and hunger is a significant issue threatening the health, wellbeing and future opportunities of Americans of all ages from urban and rural communities alike. USDA's Economic Research Service reports that 42 million individuals nationwide—13 million of them children—experience food insecurity, including 12.8 percent of Californians.³ Many of these people turn to government and private programs to prevent hunger, but our local food pantries and congregate meal programs report they are unable to meet the need that already exists. While this high incidence of hunger is disgraceful, it would be far worse were it not for the nation's profoundly successful and cost-effective SNAP known as CalFresh in California.⁴ If enacted, H.R. 2 would cut aid and erect new red-tape barriers to providing vital food assistance for the nearly 4 million California SNAP recipients who need it most and who live in every California Congressional District.⁵

In this paper, we elaborate on the changes to SNAP proposed by H.R. 2 and summarize the impact of these changes to low-income Californians and to their communities.

Summary of Changes to SNAP Proposed by H.R. 2

H.R. 2 cuts over \$20 billion in benefits in 10 years by making changes to SNAP program eligibility and verification rules. This, despite the fact that SNAP benefit cuts were made in the 2014 Farm Bill and the federal government has already achieved savings at the expense of the program and the people it serves since the passage of that legislation. H.R. 2's proposed cuts would eclipse those made in the 2014 Farm Bill and reverse many of the program efficiencies achieved by prior farm bills. While H.R. 2 proposes to reinvest some of the savings scored by food aid cuts into the SNAP,⁶ Employment and Training (E&T) Program⁷ to help people exit poverty, it does so by creating a new state mandate which is significantly underfunded to achieve this goal and, thus, cannot be expected to have a meaningful impact on increasing work participation among low-income Americans. Finally, H.R. 2 advances some helpful new policies that will protect low-income

¹ Text of H.R. 2 found at: https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/agriculture_and_nutrition_act_of_2018.pdf

² A description of SNAP found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

³ SNAP Participation data found at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8229/mapdata2015.xls>

⁴ A description of the CalFresh program found at: <http://www.calfresh.ca.gov/>

⁵ Demographics of SNAP participations by Congressional district: <http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/calfresh-reduces-hunger-every-congressional-district-california-face-deep-federal-cuts/>

⁶ Congressional Budget Office Score of H.R. 2: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr2.pdf>

⁷ A description of SNAP E&T program found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/federal-jobs-training-programs>

Americans against the demoralizing experience of hunger and the long-term consequences of hunger, but these modest investments will not make up the difference from the much larger cuts made and will have little impact on reducing hunger in California because they are duplicative of policies already adopted by our state's CalFresh program.

H.R. 2 Makes it More Difficult for Low-Income Workers to Qualify and Discourages Saving

Current law includes a "broad-based categorical eligibility" state options, which allows states to adjust the SNAP asset test and serve families with gross incomes modestly above 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)⁸ provided their net incomes (after expenses for shelter, childcare, or certain other basic expenses) are under 100% of the FPL. H.R. 2 Sec. 4006 eliminates this option, anticipating it will result in \$5 billion fewer anti-hunger benefits issued to low-income Americans.

Many states have chosen this simplification option, including California. When California implemented the law, it was estimated that it would result in an increase of approximately 6.2 percent of exiting caseload.⁹ If we apply this rate to the current caseload, we can assume that the removal of categorical eligibility is estimated to impact as few as 36,752¹⁰ and as many 126,035¹¹ California households below 200% of the poverty, most of these families will be working.¹² However, with increase in California's minimum wage in the last two years, which puts more low-income families between 130% of FPL and 200% of FPL, we estimate that the number of impacted California households could be higher. When analyzing the impact of implementing categorical eligibility, the legislature also estimated an increase of approximately 170,000 children benefiting from federally funded school meals as a result of the direct certification of children¹³ in families who were eligible due to broad based categorical eligibility.¹⁴ We believe that this number would be much higher in 2018-2019 because there are more children residing in CalFresh recipient homes than there were when categorical was implemented in California. Not only will the proposed change increase food insecurity and incidences of hunger among low-income working people with children, it will exacerbate the "cliff effect" that forces families off of aid when they improve their earnings even before they are able to meet their basic needs from their work earnings alone.

The removal of the categorical eligibility option will also significantly increase states' administrative costs and burden. This is, in part, because the removal of the option also requires 36 states to restore asset test for SNAP. Most states had removed the test because they found that it cost more to implement than it saved. The SNAP asset tests are estimated to only make 1 percent of applicants ineligible for the program, but county administrators must apply the test to 100 percent of the applicants and recipients.¹⁵ There is some evidence that eliminating the SNAP asset

⁸ 2018 Federal Poverty Level: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/01/18/2018-00814/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines>

⁹ Assembly Bill 191 (Fuentes, 2013) enacted categorical eligibility in our CalFresh Program by adding Section 18901.5 to the Welfare and Institutions Code. This Act was implemented by All County Letter

¹⁰ This is an estimate based on the CBO score divided by the percent of national participation represented by Californians.

¹¹ This is an estimate made by the California State Legislature as to the impact of C.E. implementation.

¹² We assert that most families will be working because income from public assistance alone is not enough to put a family over 100% of the federal poverty line. Supplemental Security Income maximum monthly benefit is approximately 70% of the FPL and the CalWORKs maximum benefit is 42% of the FPL.

¹³ See FRAC's resource on the connection between SNAP and school meals: <http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/snap-categorical-eligibility-and-school-meals.pdf>

¹⁴ Assembly Bill 191 (Fuentes, 2013) California State Assembly Appropriations Analysis: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billAnalysisClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB191

¹⁵ States Rethink Asset Tests for People on Food Stamps (May, 2016): <http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-states-rethink-asset-test-people-food-stamps.html>

test has helped these states reduce churn in the program, the effect of having to process multiple repeat applications for a single household. The relationship between the asset test and churn rates is believed to be because frequent asset fluctuations resulting from paycheck deposits can render participants temporarily ineligible.¹⁶ While the existence of asset tests in SNAP have not been demonstrated to directly discourage savings, because low-income families generally have too little funds to meet their basic needs and also to save, they do discourage savings for people who have fallen into poverty but have yet to spend down their savings in order to qualify for help. Making them do so lengthens the time they will spend in poverty and reduces the likelihood that they will chose to save money when they do.¹⁷

H.R. 2 Will Increase Hunger Among People Struggling to Pay for Utilities and Food

Over \$5 billion of the SNAP food benefits cuts made by H.R. 2 Sec. 4011 are achieved by slashing benefits for non-elderly SNAP households struggling to pay for utilities and food. H.R. 2 achieves these cuts by eliminating a state option to streamline SNAP benefits with low-income energy payment programs. This option, known as “heat and eat,” is an option used in California.¹⁸ Current SNAP law allows States to assign a Standard Utility Allowance in determining the Excess Shelter Costs exemption (currently capped at \$397) when calculating the net income of a household that receives utility assistance.

H.R. 2 would no longer allow states to continue with this federal option. By removing the heat and eat option, a significant number of low-income Californians who are co-housed or transitionally housed as a result of our state’s ongoing housing crisis,¹⁹ and thus don’t have a utility bill in their own name, will struggle to provide timely verification of their utility costs and will either be made ineligible for SNAP anti-hunger help or receive a reduced monthly grant. In 2014, it was estimated that as many as 300,000 households would receive lower monthly CalFresh benefits if California didn’t utilize this option, equating to a loss of \$275 million in federal food benefits and \$473 million in economic activity. Additionally, increased verification required as a result of the end of the heat and eat option will add to the already heavy verification burden of the program, further undermining the efficiency of the program.²⁰

H.R. 2 Imposes Broad New Work Requirement and an Underfunded Bureaucracy

The large majority of SNAP recipients who can work do work. Nationally, while it is true that people often receive hunger-fighting food help from SNAP when they are between jobs rather than endure hunger, it is also true that SNAP recipients have high work rates and that over 80 percent of SNAP households work in the year before or the year after receiving SNAP. Work rates are even higher for families with children: more than 60 percent work while receiving SNAP, and almost 90 percent work in the prior or subsequent year. Still, H.R. 2’s largest benefit cut proposed to the nation’s most important anti-hunger is buoyed by inflammatory political rhetoric and undergirded

¹⁶Asset Limits, SNAP Participation, and Financial Stability (June 2016), Ratcliffe, C. et. al. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/SNAPAssets.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ California implemented its "Heat and Eat" program, Chapter 501 of Statutes of 2011 enacting Assembly Bill 6 (Fuentes, D- Los Angeles) in January of 2013: http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ab_6_bill_20111006_chaptered.pdf

¹⁹ California’s High Housing Costs: Causes and Consequences (March, 2015) <http://lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.aspx>

²⁰ Mandatory and Optional Verification for CalFresh Eligibility, Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty (November 2017)https://wclp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CalFRESH_Verification_Chart_WCLP_March2018-1.pdf

by inaccurate, and often racist and misogynistic, stereotypes about who is working and who is not, rather than these very facts.

Though there have been two million jobs created in the state since the recession, these jobs tend not to pay a living wage and Californians who are working also struggle with lack of job security, underemployment and low-wages. With nearly 80 percent of poor Californians having earnings from work,²¹ many experience hunger or are forced to rely on programs in the social public safety net. Without support to improve their skills, these Californians will linger in poverty regardless of how hard they work. But H.R. 2 doesn't fix this, instead it redirects \$9.2 billion in funding from SNAP food benefits to roll out a new, very broad, work mandate and to support an unproven workforce training bureaucracy and new verification requirements for low-income working families.

Under H.R. 2 Sec. 4015, work requirements in the program would apply to “work-capable” adults – aged 18 to 60, including for the first time adults aged 50–60 and adults with dependents aged 6 and above – who must work, participate in an employment and training program, or participate in a work program for 20 hours a week (fiscal year 2021–2025) and 25 hours per week (fiscal year 2026 and thereafter) or lose SNAP eligibility. Individuals who do not meet the required weekly hours will only have one month to comply or lose SNAP food benefits for 12 months; on a subsequent failure to meet the weekly work-hours requirement, the participant would lose SNAP food benefits for 36 months, even if they begin complying with the work rule within these subsequent months. It is estimated that this new rule could impact over 1 million Californians.²²

Additionally, H.R. 2 also eliminates a provision of SNAP law that exempts parents attending college with young school-age children from the student rule and related work requirement when adequate child care is not available, forcing parents to choose between leaving a 7-year old at home along or attending a college program that could help them exit poverty. While H.R. 2 increases SNAP E&T program grant funding from the current \$90 million a year to \$250 million in fiscal year 2020, and \$1 billion in each year thereafter, the funding level is insufficient to provide meaningful and robust job training programs and support services such as childcare and transportation (see Table 1). What's more, evaluation results from 10 pilot SNAP E&T programs authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill, including one in Fresno, California,²³ are not yet available to inform this approach. States would face new administrative burdens and costs and are not well-positioned to ramp up their SNAP E&T programs adequately enough to serve those affected by the H.R. 2 time limits.

To give some context for how inadequately funded H.R. 2 is to achieve its purported goal of helping low-income Americans find a job and keep a job, the California experience should be considered. Thirty-three of California's County Human Services Agencies currently participate in an all-voluntary CalFresh E&T Program. In FFY 2017-18, funding for the program included \$10 million in federal 100% funds and federal “match” reimbursement funds totaling \$103,817,111.²⁴ Some of these federal “match” reimbursement funds are for third-parties (i.e. community colleges,

²¹ According to the Public Policy Institute of California. http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=261

²² <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-agriculture-committees-farm-bill-would-increase-food-insecurity-and>

²³ Testimony from the Fresno SNAP E&T Pilot delivered to Congress in 2016: https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/weber_testimony.pdf

²⁴ Source: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/cfl/2016-17/16-17_48.pdf

non-profit employment and training centers, etc.).²⁵ In 2015, the California state legislature estimated that it would cost nearly \$1 billion to ensure a voluntary E&T placement slot for every California that needed one in order to prevent a sanction from the Able Bodied Adult Without Dependent (ABAWD) time limit. This is the same amount that H.R. 2 would make available to the entire country and to a population of people that is expanded beyond ABAWDs to include entire new, harder to employ, categories of people. In our opinion, this proposal is not simply foolhardy in its estimate of how much it would cost to achieve this goal, but rather disingenuous that the goal is to actually help poor Americans get to work rather than to simply achieve savings by eliminating essential anti-hunger benefits for out-of-work Americans.

Regardless of the political banter, there is no evidence that applying a time limit and work requirement actually helps people find work²⁶ or that increasing hunger among “work capable” adults and their families actually improves the likelihood that once they find a job, they will be scheduled to work sufficient hours or that they will be able to keep that job. In fact, countless scientific studies about hunger have demonstrated the opposite: that hunger makes a person less likely to excel or succeed at anything. For our further evaluation of why mandatory work requirements for SNAP do not work as purported, and instead undermine the success of work and out-of-work job hunters, see our paper on ABAWD Time Limits.²⁷

H.R. 2 Would Require States to Deny Aid to People Unable to Pay Child Support Debt

Current law allows states to deny SNAP assistance to non-custodial parents who are not in compliance with child support, currently an option that 45 states and the District of Columbia, including California, have chosen not to take. H.R. 2 Sec. 4007 is purportedly aimed at increasing compliance with child support, but there is no evidence that this would be the impact. In fact, California’s Review Committee for Statewide Uniform Child Support Guidelines published recommended policy changes in 2010 aimed at improving compliance for low-income parents that are obligated to pay child support. The Committee concluded that a right-sized low-income adjustment under the California guidelines could reduce a barrier to compliance with child support orders. The California Department of Child Support Services posited that a consistent payment of support by low-income obligors is better met if the order is “right-sized,” enabling obligors to successfully meet their own basic needs and their child support obligations, resulting in more consistent child support payments, improving the income stream for families, promoting family self-sufficiency and improving overall wellbeing of children living in single-parent households.²⁸ So, while H.R. 2’s provision to ban assistance to low-income child support obligors may appear to be helpful to low-income families with children, evidence from California suggests that undermining economic stability of low-income obligors will actually have the opposite effect.

²⁵ Effective with the December 2016 quarter, PC 364 CFET Third Party Match is available for claiming third party reimbursements to the CFET 50 percent allocation. Counties may utilize this code separately and/or concurrently with the PC 464 (CFET Administrative Activities). Please see CFL NO. 16/17-44 for additional information.

²⁶ “SNAP Reports Present Misleading Findings on Impact of Three-Month Time Limit,” (December 14, 2016) by Dottie Rosenbaum and Ed Bolen <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-reports-present-misleading-findings-on-impact-of-three-month-time>

²⁷ https://wclp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SNAP_ABAWD_PositionPaper_WCLP_March2018_Final-1.pdf

²⁸ Assembly Bill 2323 (Davis) was passed in 2012 and signed by Governor Jerry Brown, expanding the value of the child-support low-income disregard following the Committee’s findings and the sunset of this expanded threshold was extended with the enactment of Senate Bill 469 (Skinner) following initial evidence that it had served its intended purpose to improve compliance. Both bills had bi-partisan support in the legislature.

H.R. 2 Would Allow States to Complicate the Electronic Benefit Payment (EBT) System

Increasing stigma and barriers for Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card holders could result from H.R. 2's provision to allow EBT cards to include biometrics, such as photos, on the EBT Card. EBT cards are used to distribute financial benefits to authorized units in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program and certified CalFresh households. CalFresh is required by federal law to be distributed only through EBT. CalWORKs is required by state law only to be distributed through EBT. Some counties chose to also have General Assistance or General Relief payments distributed using the EBT system. The cards are similar to bank debit cards and allow the benefit recipients to spend their food and cash benefits at a Point of Sale (POS) device at a retailer certified to accept EBT or to withdraw cash assistance at an Automated Teller Machine (ATM).²⁹ In order to accept EBT for CalFresh purchases, the vendor must meet all federal requirements and be authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).³⁰ In order for the vendor to be authorized to accept CalWORKs benefits, the vendor must be qualified under new federal regulations³¹ and existing state executive order.³²

Western Center has always strongly opposed proposals to add biometrics in the EBT card process. These proposals have been considered and rejected by numerous states, including California,³³ and should likewise be rejected in Congress. There is no evidence that adding biometrics would reduce fraud, as purported, without violating federal equal protection laws, and implementation would be costly to administrators, burdensome for retailers and difficult for benefit recipients of all programs served by the EBT system.

H.R. 2 Small Investments to Expand Eligibility of Little Help to California

As the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) states in their summary of H.R. 2, it's, "huge cuts to SNAP food benefits are not cured by modest reinvestments to keep the nutrition title cost neutral (approximately \$5 billion over 10 years)." What's more, few of these new investments will work to reduce hunger in California.

Military Family Basic Allowance for Housing Excluded: H.R. 2 Sec. 4008 will allow military families living off-base to exclude \$500 of their base allowance for housing (BAH) when determining SNAP eligibility and allow those households to claim expenses that exceed that threshold for purposes of their shelter deduction. California has 184,540 active military and reserve personnel.³⁴ Unemployment rates of military spouses has been documented to reach up to 30 percent according to the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. This high unemployment rate has been attributed to frequent moves, deployments, a lack of job opportunities in some station locations, and increased parenting responsibilities due to the service members' long hours. With reduced ability to have two breadwinners, the FINRA

²⁹ California EBT Client Website. Available at: https://www.ebt.ca.gov/caebtclient/reciplogin_client.jsp

³⁰ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retail-store-eligibility-usda-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

³¹ <http://www.wclp.org/Resources/WCLPContent/WCLPContentSearch/tabid/1131/smId/3613/ArticleID/907/reftab/1133/t/WCLP-Submits-Comments-on-Federal-TANF-Proposed-Rules/Default.aspx>

³² http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acin/2010/1-68_10.pdf

³³ AB 2354 (Conway) was introduced 2014 and failed passage in its first policy committee.

³⁴ A 2016 survey of more than 8,000 active military members conducted by Blue Star Families found that 43 percent had participated in social welfare programs, and 7 percent experienced food insecurity that year. A 2016 Government Accountability Office report citing U.S. Census Bureau data said that about 23,000 active-duty troops received food stamps in 2013. About 751,000 food stamp transactions, or almost \$80 million in purchases, were completed at military commissaries in 2015, the latest year for which data were readily available. But it is unclear whether those users were active-duty shoppers who regularly receive BAH, or other patrons, such as retirees, National Guard members or reservists. (Source: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/07/11/congress-unlikely-expand-military-food-stamp-eligibility-year.html>)

Investor Education Foundation found that more than 40 percent of military personnel had difficulty making ends meet, rising to 56 percent of entry-level personnel.³⁵ In California, the monthly BAH for beginning-ranking personnel with dependents can be over \$3,000, due to our high cost of living. As a result, California's military families are less likely to be eligible for SNAP's anti-hunger relief than their peers on other states with lower costs of housing and the \$500 investment proposed by H.R. 2 will likely not change that at all.

Simplified Homeless Family Shelter Expenses: H.R. 2 Sec. 4010 requires states to provide a simplified homeless housing deduction,³⁶ which is currently a state option. Since California has already opted into providing a simplified shelter expense deduction to families that are homeless, this provision will have no impact in our state.

Transitional SNAP: H.R. 2 Sec. 4024 would require states to provide transitional CalFresh to families with children leaving a cash aid program. Since California has already opted into providing transitional CalFresh,³⁷ this provision will have no impact in our state.

Increase of the Asset Test: Under current law, SNAP allows for states to choose categorical eligibility, which allows for a waiver of the asset test. H.R. 2 would remove categorical eligibility and, thus, restore the asset test in the program. California is one of 36 states that has selected this option.³⁸ While H.R. 2 Sec. 4012 4014 lessen the impact of the asset test by increasing the maximum allowable value of assets from \$2,000 to \$7,000 for most participating households, and from \$3,000 to \$12,000 for households with a person who is disabled or is elderly and Sec. 4013 would increase the vehicle allowance that is excluded from asset calculations, these small investments would come nowhere near making up the difference in the bill's deletion of the categorical eligibility option. The result would be a loss of aid for low-income people who have been successful in saving and would discourage people on the program from accruing future savings which could help them not just prevent harm while living in poverty, but to exit poverty for good.

Increase in Earned Income Deduction: With nearly 80 percent of low-income California families having earnings from work, the one single investment made by H.R. 2 Sec. 4009 which has the potential to increase help for SNAP applicants and recipients is the \$4.6 billion it proposes to increase the earned income deduction from 20 to 22 percent when determining SNAP eligibility. To get a sense of the impact of this change, a 3-person household with one parent working full-time at \$11 per hour would have an increase in the earned income deduction from \$330 to \$362 per month and, assuming rental costs of \$1,000 per month (less than average two-bedroom in California), their SNAP benefits would increase from \$316 to \$326 per month. While this \$10

³⁵ FINRA Investor Education Foundation Financial Capability Study: <http://www.finra.org/investors/highlights/many-faces-americas-financial-capability>

³⁶ CDSS Citation Reference for People Who Are Homeless: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/Toolkit/QuickReference/RegulationQuickReference_C_PeopleWhoAreHomeless.pdf

³⁷ Established in 2003 based on Assembly Bill (AB) 1752 (Chapter 225, Statutes of 2003), AB 231 (Chapter 743, Statutes of 2003). Section 18901.6 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, CalWORKs Transitional CalFresh All County Letter Updated Policy: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2013/13-88.pdf>

Implementing ACL: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl03/pdf/03-66.pdf>
Q&As: http://www.calfresh.ca.gov/entres/getinfo/acin04/pdf/I-21_04.pdf

All-County Information Notice (ACIN) I-58-03 and Manual of Policies and Procedures 63-504.13

³⁸ According to www.governing.com: <http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-states-rethink-asset-test-people-food-stamps.html>

increase in monthly benefit would help, it would likely not be enough to make up the additional burden of these same families who will now be required to provide monthly verification of hours worked due to the new work requirement and will have increased verification requirements for utility costs and asset test limit compliance.

H.R. 2 Will Increase Unemployment & Hunger Among People Who Work in the Food Economy

SNAP is not only effective at preventing hunger and some of the worst outcomes of poverty, it also strengthens communities and retailers who depend on shoppers paying with SNAP when their income falls short. In fact, every \$1 billion in SNAP benefits redeemed generates \$97 million in farm cash receipts, which translates into 950 farm jobs and \$32 million of income to farmers and hired farmworkers³⁹ and an increase of 8,900 to 17,900 full-time equivalent jobs⁴⁰ in the general economy. In California, SNAP provided \$6.5 billion in food benefits last year,⁴¹ resulting in \$11.7 billion in total economic activity and more than 65,000 jobs statewide.⁴² Making cuts to SNAP will result in fewer jobs, especially in communities like those throughout California that rely on farming and food production industries.

H.R. 2 Missed the Opportunity to Strengthen SNAP

Perhaps the most disappointing feature of H.R. 2 is that it failed to make needed benefit improvements in SNAP. In fact, it fails to adopt the provisions of H.R. 1276 (Rep. Adams, NC-12),⁴³ which increases benefit levels on SNAP, H.R. 3875 (Rep. Lawson, FL-5),⁴⁴ which would specifically exempt additional categories of low-income students from the SNAP college student ban, or H.R. 3557 (Rep. Costa, CA-16),⁴⁵ which would support more employment and training programs that build off of the bi-partisan proposals to pilot promising practices passed in the 2014 Farm Bill. All of these proposals had strong support across the country, and especially in California.

What's more, H.R. 2 Sec. 4008, relating to Military Family Hunger, would have little, if any impact in California and lengthen the reach of the shameful legacy of allowing military families to go without food. Western Center has worked with MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger and a host of California's Congressional leaders for years to change the law relating to how the Base Allowance for Housing (BAH) given to active duty military members to pay for housing when on-base housing is not an option. Our recommendation has been, for years, that the BAH authorizing language in the federal National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) should be changed to clarify that this allowance should not be counted as income. In 2014, Representative Juan Vargas of California prepared an amendment to that would have exempted the BAH from all needs tested benefits (including SNAP), but was not given the opportunity to have the amendment heard in committee. In the Senate, Senator Barbara Boxer of California proposed the same amendment (No. 1463) to the NDAA, but it failed to be included in the reauthorization. In 2015 Representative Susan Davis of California introduced the Military Hunger Prevention Act (H.R. 1078),⁴⁶ which would (more specifically) block BAH from being counted as income for SNAP eligibility calculations.

³⁹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2006/september/food-stamp-program-boosts-farm-income-and-jobs/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/>

⁴¹ California Budget & Policy Center analysis of CA Dept. of Social Services Benefit Issuance Data for CAFY17-18.

⁴² California Budget & Policy Center analysis of CA Dept. of Social Services Benefit Issuance Data for CAFY17-18.

⁴³ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1276?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.+1276%22%5D%7D&r=1>

⁴⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3875?r=202>

⁴⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3577>

⁴⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1078>

Proponents had sought to include the provisions of the Act into the 2018 NDAA, but so far have been unsuccessful. Just this year, the U.S. Senate introduced a Senate Bill that mirrors the House version and that has the support of both California Senators and Republican lawmakers. But this bi-partisan, bi-cameral effort is undermined by H.R. 2 which offers only that \$500 of the BAH can be deducted. To give some context to this proposal, the monthly BAH for beginning-ranking personnel with dependents can be over \$3,000 in California. As a result, California's military families are less likely to be eligible for relief by the minimal investment proposed by H.R. 2. If it passes with this provision, efforts to pass a more appropriately sized and holistic response, one that can help active duty military families in California avert hunger, and one that includes clarification for child-care, will likely be halted.

Californians Should Oppose H.R. 2

In anticipation of the 2018 Farm Bill debate, many organizations and leaders across the country issued statements in support of strengthening SNAP. In California, over 100 organizations that signed on in advance of the Farm Bill negotiations to ask for a stronger SNAP that would reduce hunger.⁴⁷ Additionally, Secretaries from four California Agencies sent a letter to Congress emphasizing the importance of SNAP to California and urging California delegation members to strengthen the program in the next Farm Bill.⁴⁸

- To oppose H.R. 2, individuals can send letters to their members of congress using this online portal provided by MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger : <https://tinyurl.com/MAZON-Stop-HR2FarmBill-SNAPCut>.
- Organizations can sign on to oppose H.R. 2 at: <https://tinyurl.com/CA-Oppose-HR2-FarmBill>

For federal level summaries of H.R. 2 and updates about federal negotiations on the 2018 Farm Bill, we recommend visiting the websites for the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) www.frac.org and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) www.centeronbudget.org.

About Western Center on Law and Poverty: Western Center on Law and Poverty (WCLP) serves as a support center for California's legal aid community and leads the way in large-scale impact litigation, administrative advocacy, budget advocacy and legislative advocacy in an effort to ensure that low-income Californians can easily access safe and affordable housing, adequate health care, and safety net services. www.wclp.org. For more information about Western Center's anti-hunger priorities, please contact: Jessica Bartholow at jbartholow@wclp.org or 916-282-5119.

⁴⁷ Link to the California "Stronger SNAP in Farm Bill" sign on letter: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/farm_bill/pdfs/2018FarmBillPriorities.pdf

⁴⁸ Letter sent by Secretaries of four California State Agencies: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/farm_bill/pdfs/2018FarmBillPriorities.pdf

TABLE ONE: Monthly Bus Pass Costs by California County (2016)

Prepared by Western Center on Law and Poverty & the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

County	Monthly Bus Pass Costs
Statewide	
ALAMEDA	\$64.00
ALPINE	\$100.00
AMADOR	\$75.00
BUTTE	\$37.50
CALAVERAS	\$60.00
COLUSA	\$54.25
CONTRA COSTA	\$60.00
DEL NORTE	\$35.00
EL DORADO	\$60.00
FRESNO	\$48.00
GLENN	\$50.00
HUMBOLDT	\$90.00
IMPERIAL	\$100.00
INYO	\$100.00
KERN	\$36.00
KINGS	\$93.00
LAKE	\$90.00
LASSEN	\$100.00
LOS ANGELES	\$100.00
MADERA	\$100.00
MARIN	\$80.00
MARIPOSA	\$240.00
MENDOCINO	\$100.00
MERCED	\$90.00
MODOC	\$100.00
MONO	\$100.00
MONTEREY	\$95.00
NAPA	\$120.00
NEVADA	\$45.00
ORANGE	\$69.00
PLACER	\$43.00
PLUMAS	\$100.00
RIVERSIDE	\$75.00
SACRAMENTO	\$100.00
SAN BERNARDINO	\$100.00
SAN DIEGO	\$72.00

TABLE ONE (Continued): Monthly Bus Pass Costs by California County (2016)
 Prepared by Western Center on Law and Poverty & the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

SAN FRANCISCO	\$135.00
SAN JOAQUIN	\$65.00
SAN LUIS OBISPO	\$44.00
SAN MATEO	\$64.00
SANTA BARBARA	\$52.00
SANTA CLARA	\$70.00
SANTA CRUZ	\$113.00
SHASTA	\$48.25
SIERRA	\$100.00
SISKIYOU	\$60.00
SOLANO	\$45.00
SONOMA	\$62.50
STANISLAUS	\$45.00
SUTTER	\$30.00
TEHAMA	\$40.00
TRINITY	\$100.00
TULARE	\$45.00
TUOLUMNE	\$100.00
VENTURA	\$50.00
YOLO	\$85.00
YUBA	\$30.00