



Response to U.S. Senate Passage of H. R. 2 – 2018 Farm Bill

June 29, 2018

Today, the U.S. Senate passed out [their version of the 2018 Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 \(H.R. 2\)](#) with a [bi-partisan vote of 86 to 11](#). The Senate version of [H.R. 2 is dramatically different from the U.S. House of Representatives](#), which makes significant and draconian changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as [CalFresh in California](#). During the vote, the Senate considered [an amendment](#) that would have reduced federal SNAP anti-hunger help for low-income, out-of-work or under-employed Americans. That amendment was voted not to be included with a [bi-partisan vote of 68 to 30](#), which should indicate to the forthcoming Farm Bill Conference Committee that the Senate is committed to passing a Farm Bill that weakens this essential safety net program.

We are grateful to California's Senators, Senator Kamala Harris and Senator Dianne Feinstein who worked closely with our offices during the Senate deliberations and voted "NO" on the harmful amendment proposed during H.R. 2 deliberation and "AYE" on the final bill.

With 40 Million Americans, [4 million of whom live in California](#), struggling to prevent hunger every day, California's anti-hunger community [articulated our hope](#) at the beginning of [Farm Bill](#) deliberations that legislative leaders would use the reauthorization to strengthen and support SNAP, whose recipients live in every community [throughout California](#), [in rural](#) and [urban](#) communities alike.

While SNAP is our country's most important defense against hunger, it only provides \$2.00 per meal, an amount that the [National Medical Association has determined is less than what is needed to purchase a healthy diet](#). Because benefits are so low, nearly one-third of households that receive SNAP rely on food banks to further protect against hunger. During the deliberation of the Senate Agriculture and Nutrition Act, we were grateful that the funds these programs depend on through the [Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program \(TEFAP\)](#) were increased above the introduced version, which funded them below the amount cited by food bank officials and necessary to meet the need.

While the Senate version of H.R. 2 supports and extends the reach of important SNAP [employment and training \(E&T\) pilots](#), a change we support, it also codifies regulations for the [Able Body Adult Without Dependents \(ABAWD\)](#) time limit and related work requirements, a change we do not support. This rule has long-been opposed by anti-hunger advocates in the

state and we have recently been joined by [Secretaries of three California Agencies in calling for the rule be repealed altogether](#). The proposed amendments in the Senate version of H.R. 2 are not, on their face, problematic, but amending the rule takes SNAP policy in the exact opposite direction than what we had proposed and so we cannot support it.

Still, we congratulate the Senate Committee Chairman Pat Roberts and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow as well as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for their leadership in securing the bi-partisan passage of a Farm Bill that makes no cuts to SNAP benefits and we are relieved that they did not follow the lead of the House of Representatives, whose [Farm Bill \(H.R.2\)](#) included \$20 billion over 10 years in cuts to SNAP which were intensely opposed by [anti-hunger advocates](#), [state elected leaders](#), [county welfare directors and administrators](#), and [bipartisan mayors](#). The House version barely passed on June 21 by a vote of 213-211.

While we wish that the Farm Bill were used as an opportunity to achieve an America where no one goes hungry, we are satisfied with this week's vote and hopeful that, if a Farm Bill is agreed upon by both houses, that it will reauthorize farming, food and nutrition programs without harm to low-income Americans and their communities. In the coming weeks, we will be looking for announcements from House and Senate leadership about the next steps in the Farm Bill deliberation.

We are grateful to our national anti-hunger partners. Their statements on the passage of the Senate Farm and Nutrition Act – H.R.2 can be found here:

- Food Research and Action Center: <http://www.frac.org/news/5355>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <https://www.cbpp.org/press/statements/greenstein-congress-should-use-senate-farm-bill-as-basis-for-final-bill>
- Center on Law and Social Policy: <https://www.clasp.org/tags/farm-bill-2018>
- MAZON a Jewish Response to Hunger: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/mazon-celebrates-senate-farm-bill-passage-300674477.html>

For more information on the California Association of Food Bank's Farm Bill Advocacy, please visit www.cafoodbanks.org or contact: Andrew Cheyne at andrew@cafoodbanks.org or Rachel Tucker at rachel@cafoodbanks.org

For more information on the California Food Policy Advocates' Farm Bill Advocacy, please visit www.cfpa.net or contact: Jared Call at jared@cfpa.net

For more information Western Center's Farm Bill Advocacy, please visit www.wclp.org, or contact Jessica Bartholow at jbartholow@wclp.org or 916-282-5119. Please see [Western Center's position paper on H.R.2](#) or our [more detailed paper on the impact](#) of H.R. 2 on California.