

September 10, 2018

The Honorable Fred Upton
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Upton:

Thank you for your “no” vote on the House version of the 2018 Farm Bill on June 21. Your office stated that you opposed the bill due to the harm it would have caused for those relying on food assistance in your district. We appreciate your standing for a strong Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a program that helped 1,375,000 Michigan residents last year.

As you know, the farm bill is currently in conference committee and will likely be finalized in September. We encourage you to continue to stand as a champion for food assistance, for the benefit of struggling households in your district, in the state of Michigan, and in the entire country. While we do not know the content of the conference bill just yet, we ask that you reject any aspects or amendments that jeopardize SNAP’s ability to help families and individuals put food on their tables during difficult times, and that you support changes that strengthen SNAP:

- Please oppose the implementation of **new work requirements or programs**, particularly since Congress has not yet been given the results of demonstration projects (which are nearing completion and for which Congress appropriated \$200 million in FY 2013) to test various approaches to employment services, work programs, and work requirements.
- Please oppose the **reinstatement of a federal vehicle allowance** and taking away states’ ability to establish a higher or more flexible allowance.
- Please oppose any requirement that parents or guardians not living with the child’s other parent **cooperate with child support enforcement** in order to receive SNAP benefits, or that would sanction noncustodial parents who are in arrears on child support payments. Some estranged or divorced parents are in fragile or endangered situations with the parent of their child and this could be exacerbated by such requirements.
- Please support **raising the federal asset limit**, which is currently \$2,250 (\$3,250 for households with elderly or disabled residents). This would enable unemployed workers to feed their families as they look for work without spending down their savings.
- Please support requiring that all states provide five months of **transitional SNAP benefits** to families that leave TANF cash assistance (without requiring them to reapply or submit additional paperwork).
- Please support an **increase in the earned income deduction** (used to calculate benefits), which would give a modest benefit increase to households with earnings.
- Please support **expanded categorical eligibility**, which lets certain households who receive other assistance receive SNAP if their gross income is below 200% (instead of 130%) of poverty, and oppose any amendments to eliminate it. If it is eliminated, 20,000 Michigan households and 45,000 individuals would lose SNAP eligibility.

The Honorable Fred Upton
Page 2
September 10, 2018

- Please support the **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program**, which provides funding for the Double Up Food Bucks program, and protect it from proposed cuts or elimination. Double Up Food Bucks encourages individuals and families with low incomes to consume healthy, fresh produce by working with local farmers' markets to help recipients' SNAP benefit dollars go twice as far in the purchase of such produce. The program requires a match, which can include private philanthropic funds.

Thank you for your support of SNAP and of households that are struggling.

Sincerely,

Center for Civil Justice
Community Economic Development Association of Michigan
Michigan Association of United Ways
Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness
Michigan Community Action
Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan Farmers Market Association
Michigan League for Public Policy
Michigan Poverty Law Program
Michigan's Children
National Association of Social Workers—Michigan Chapter