



Testimony Submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
(Michigan State University)

Testimony on Farm Bill Reauthorization

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The Michigan League for Public Policy would like to thank Senator Stabenow for her consistent support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during each reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Last year, as Michigan continued to grapple with the pandemic, SNAP served about one in eight Michigan residents, and almost 61% of Michigan SNAP participants were in families with children.

We would especially like to highlight Senator Stabenow's championing of the improvements to the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) enacted by the Biden administration last August. That reform increases food benefits for each person in a household by an average of \$36.24 per month, or \$1.20 per day. While modest, the TFP benefit increase provides needed relief to many Michigan households.

Nationally, the TFP revision will lift an estimated 2.4 million people, including more than 1 million children, above the poverty line. It will also reduce the severity of poverty for another 20.5 million people, including 6.2 million children.

As a federal benefit program, SNAP responds to economic needs very well. As poverty and unemployment rise, SNAP caseloads rise, and they fall as the economy improves. Because strict eligibility requirements prevent Michigan's cash assistance program from reaching many families in poverty, SNAP helps those families put food on the table and free up some of their limited monetary resources to meet other household needs. And because Michigan discontinued its General Assistance program nearly 30 years ago, SNAP can be one of the few resources of food for adults without children.

In addition to helping individuals and families, SNAP benefits local communities and businesses. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that in a weak economy, each SNAP benefit dollar a household spends at one of Michigan's approximately 9,600 authorized retail locations will generate \$1.50 in economic activity. This helps to keep stores open and employees working and prevents economic hardship.

As we look toward the reauthorization of the Farm Bill next year, the League would like to bring to your attention our policy priorities to further improve SNAP's ability to respond effectively to food insecurity:

ADVANCING ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND A RACIAL EQUITY LENS

- Support eliminating SNAP's three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents. Studies have repeatedly shown that the time limit does not increase employment or earnings, but simply cuts off people from the benefits they need. In the absence of the ability to remove this limit entirely, please support the availability of hardship waivers from the limit for counties and metropolitan areas with high unemployment.
- Vigorously oppose any attempt in Congress to turn back the reforms of the Thrifty Food Plan, to mandate child support cooperation requirements or asset tests, or to impose any other harmful policy that would prevent otherwise eligible households from receiving benefits.
- Ensure program operations and oversight keep pace with technology. The pandemic forced SNAP to adapt quickly to new circumstances. State application and certification systems must remain accessible and efficient by the smart use of technology.
- Redesign SNAP performance measures to be more human-centered. SNAP's current performance measurement system emphasizes preventing improper payments. States and the USDA have a rigorous measurement system in place for this critical work. Currently information is not available to policymakers or the public about how well SNAP is working in terms of the human experience of accessing benefits, such as equitable access and effective delivery.

We would like to thank Senator Stabenow and this committee for its continued support of the SNAP program and its positive provisions in the Farm Bill.