

November 12, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Lucas, and Ranking Members Cochran and Peterson:

As organizations that work to promote the economic security of low-income women and their families, we urge you to protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the farm bill. The House-passed SNAP bill (H.R. 3102) includes deep funding cuts and harmful policy changes to SNAP that would cut off access to critical nutrition assistance for millions of vulnerable Americans. We ask you to reject these proposals and instead to protect and strengthen SNAP and other nutrition programs in the final farm bill conference report.

Women and children bear the brunt of cuts to SNAP. In fiscal year 2011, 62 percent of nonelderly adult recipients and 66 percent of elderly recipients were women, most of whom had incomes at or below the federal poverty line. Nearly 56 percent of all SNAP households with children were headed by a single adult, and virtually all of these single parents were women. As of November 1, when the Recovery Act's temporary boost to SNAP benefits expired, monthly benefits for a mother with two children are \$29 lower – equivalent to about 16 meals based on the cost of the U.S. Agriculture Department's "Thrifty Food Plan." SNAP benefits in fiscal year 2014 will now average less than \$1.40 per person per meal; a further decrease in SNAP funding will leave women with even more limited resources to prepare nutritious meals for their preschool age children (who represent a third of all children receiving SNAP benefits), older children outside of school hours, and themselves.

H.R. 3102 would dramatically weaken SNAP by cutting nearly \$40 billion from the program, causing nearly 4 million participants to lose benefits entirely in fiscal year 2014 and an average of 3 million individuals each year to lose benefits over the next decade. Millions more would see their benefits reduced by an average of \$90 per month.

Under H.R. 3102, SNAP benefits could be eliminated entirely for adults who do not work or participate in a training program for at least 20 hours each week, even if those adults have young children. Benefits for both the adults and their children could be cut, regardless of how scarce jobs and job training opportunities are in the recipients' communities. Millions of families with extremely low incomes could lose one of the only resources they have to feed their children – and the bill actually incentivizes states to drop these families from the SNAP rolls by allowing states to keep half the savings from ending SNAP benefits to spend any way they choose.

The changes in the House-passed bill would affect millions of our country's most vulnerable women, children, and seniors, cutting off the lifeline that SNAP provides in communities that have been left behind in the recovery. With sequestration cutting deeply into other supports for low-income families and unemployment still unacceptably high, especially for single moms and women and men of color, it is essential for Congress to protect SNAP and other nutrition programs – such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program – that are vital to our nation's safety net. We strongly urge you to reject cuts to nutrition assistance programs in the farm bill and to safeguard the programs' current levels of benefits, eligibility, and essential services.

Sincerely,

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Advocacy for Justice and Peace Committee

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

Fair Food Network

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.

Jewish Women International

MomsRising

National Association of Commissions for Women

National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women and Families

National Women's Law Center

OWL

Southwest Women's Law Center

Ultraviolet

United Methodist Women

UniteWomen.org ACTION