



June 26, 2018

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris
U.S. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: SUPPORT SNAP PROVISIONS IN THE FARM BILL & OPPOSE FELON AND PRIVATIZATION AMENDMENTS

Dear Senators Feinstein and Harris:

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) and County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) support the Agriculture Improvement Act (S. 3042). We oppose any floor amendments to weaken the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and outline specific concerns below.

We support the bipartisan bill's improvements to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). They include:

Extending the Certification Period for Older Adult Households: We support Section 4101 giving states the option to extend the SNAP benefits certification period from 24 to 36 months for households in which all adults are 60 or older or are disabled and had no earned income since the last certification. The provision will ensure that eligible households will continue to receive uninterrupted benefits and will reduce county administrative costs for that segment of the SNAP population.

Increasing Funding and Flexibility for Employment and Training (E&T) Pilots: We support Section 4103 expanding the types of activities allowed in SNAP E&T programs and the \$185 million spending increase for new competitive state grants to launch pilot projects for new E&T initiatives. We also support the new requirements requiring additional skills assessments and case management for participants who have not found suitable training and that job training be combined with at least one other activity.

Nutrition Education: We support Section 4115 requiring greater federal coordination of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education program (SNAP-Ed). The House provision in H.R. 2 to change SNAP-Ed will result in the loss of needed funding to teach families and individuals about good nutrition and the wise use of limited SNAP benefits. The Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators estimates that California is among 12 states facing an immediate funding cut under the House bill.

Potential Amendments

If introduced, we will oppose the following amendments and others which would restrict or deny benefits or affect the efficient administration of SNAP.

Lifetime Ban on Benefits for Felons Upon Serving their Sentence: We oppose any amendments to deny food assistance to anyone after they have served their prison sentence. Current law already denies food assistance to individuals who were found guilty of a violent crime if, after release from prison, they violate their parole or the terms of their release. Evidence demonstrates that individuals who receive support for basic needs upon release from prison, including food and housing, are far less likely to commit a crime. SNAP supports individuals and families facing a short-term economic crisis or job loss. Persons attempting to reintegrate successfully into society deserve the same.

Privatizing SNAP Administration: We oppose the amendment filed by Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) giving states the option to outsource administration of the SNAP program. SNAP is one of the most effectively and efficiently administered federal benefit programs. Over the years, states and counties have partnered with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to reduce payment errors to their lowest rates ever, with overpayment rates in the low single digits. Many states and counties already contract with the private sector to design and operate automation systems and the electronic delivery of benefits. Our county caseworkers know the community in which they live and the work closely with clients. Previous food stamp privatization attempts in Texas and Indiana failed miserably, at great cost to the state and the loss of benefits to eligible individuals and families.

CWDA and CHEAC urge you to adopt the SNAP provisions in S. 3042 currently and reject the potential amendments outlined above. We offer you our county directors as resources to guide you further in improving SNAP and its related services.

Sincerely,



Frank Mecca
Executive Director | CWDA



Michelle Gibbons
Executive Director | CHEAC