



The Honorable Ed Perlmutter
1410 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Perlmutter,

As organizations committed to improving the health, nutrition, education, and well-being of Colorado communities, we write to thank you for opposing the House Farm Bill, H.R. 2, (the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018) on the House floor last month.

SNAP is crucial to combatting food insecurity in Colorado. Food insecurity is already too common among Colorado's kids, with one in six children living in households that face food insecurity at some point during the year. In 2017, SNAP benefits helped 459,000 Coloradans pay for groceries, with more than 72 percent of these recipients being families with children. SNAP is Colorado's most effective anti-hunger tool, providing families and communities across the state resources that improve economic stability, health, and education outcomes.

We understand this same measure, H.R. 2, will be up for a vote on the House floor again as soon as this week; we respectfully ask that you maintain your opposition to the bill. Rather than ensuring Coloradans have access to affordable nutritious food, the House Farm Bill creates additional barriers for those participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and jeopardizes future enrollment in the program. At 45th in the nation for connecting eligible individuals to SNAP, Colorado already lags behind other states; this is just one more reason energy should be spent improving access to SNAP, rather than creating obstacles that make it harder for families to access program. Another concern: historically, the Farm Bill is a bipartisan piece of legislation that can garner the support of urban, rural, and suburban interests; a partisan bill, this year's proposal from the House flies in the face of longstanding bipartisanship and historical precedent.

Of particular concern to us are new and burdensome work requirements that will increase barriers to accessing SNAP while increasing administrative costs to the State and Colorado counties. It is important to note that SNAP already includes work requirements; the House bill makes the existing requirements unworkable with absurd provisions, such as one that changes the age of a dependent (aka a child) from 16 to six and under and aggressive penalties.

More generally, we want to stress that adding work requirements to public assistance programs is an unproven strategy for improving family outcomes. It also perpetuates a false narrative that links poverty with laziness and unemployment when, in reality,



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increasing costs and stagnant wages are to blame. Most families who receive SNAP benefits are already working. A recent study of the employment and earnings of Kansas parents who left the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) after the implementation of work requirements, found that most individuals subject to harsh work requirements remained poor, while others became poorer. Evidence from the study further suggests that employment increases among recipients subject to work requirements were modest at best and faded over time.

Coloradans of all stripes share an interest in increasing opportunity, reducing poverty, and see a greater share of residents connected to living wage jobs. Tested methods of improving long-term employment trajectories investing in education and smart, job training programs. Also critical to long-term success: food. No one is at their best when hungry.

Affordable access to nutritious food is essential to maintaining health, educational attainment and long-term economic self-sufficiency. Because SNAP, Colorado saved \$1-\$2 billion in healthcare costs in 2016 alone, according to the Public Health Institute. SNAP is also good for local economies. In 2017, retailers in Colorado redeemed about \$700 million in SNAP benefits, serving as a driver for economic growth in the communities where SNAP recipients live and work. These are all reasons to maintain SNAP and to reject the changes the House Farm Bill proposes.

Even amid a growing economy, hunger remains a challenge for many Colorado families and communities. Programs like SNAP support the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of local families and play a crucial role in helping Colorado children and families thrive. That is why we ask you to oppose the House Farm Bill (H.R. 2).

Sincerely,

Children's Hospital Colorado
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Fiscal Institute
Healthy Child Care Colorado
Hunger Free Colorado
LiveWell Colorado
Qualistar Colorado
Re:Vision
Tri-County Health Network
United For A New Economy