

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, the Child and Student Nutrition Alliance, and the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our opposition to the House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill proposal released by the Majority last week. We are particularly concerned because the draft rescinds the necessary updates to the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) which determines the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for children. Your committee's proposal is not grounded in the reality of what American families are facing when it comes to food security. The proposal prohibits SNAP from implementing changes to the TFP if they are not cost-neutral, and we firmly believe that this draconian plan will harm children's health and our country's economic future. We urge you to prioritize the needs of America's families and to take every possible step to protect the nutritional well being of children in any future draft of the Farm Bill.

Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP benefits go directly to the 14.6 million children enrolled in the program. SNAP is proven to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and metabolic disease and actually improves health outcomes for children in both the short and long term. A lack of food, caused by a lack of access to financial assistance to purchase nutritional food, is proven to contribute to developmental delays, poor immune functioning, and worsened mental health outcomes and is especially harmful to disabled children.

While a family may be able to provide enough calories to keep a child from going hungry, the rising prices of fresh and nutritious foods mean that many children are malnourished. Parents are often unable to purchase whole foods like dairy, eggs, unprocessed meat, and produce, forcing families to rely on cheaper processed foods. A diet lacking in nutrient-dense foods leads to health complications like diabetes, early onset heart disease, tooth decay, and cancer. Malnutrition early in life leads to poorer outcomes later in life, as children who experience unmitigated food insecurity are more likely to rely on government programs in adulthood. Needless to say, dollars invested today in SNAP will reap measurable and meaningful dividends in a child's ability to not only achieve better health but also long-term financial independence. Children who receive SNAP perform better in school, become healthier and more productive adults, and pay more in taxes — a combination that results in a \$9 return for every \$5 spent on SNAP. Failing to provide adequate SNAP benefits for children today is not only immoral but also fiscally irresponsible as it will create a far more intense drain on federal tax dollars down the road.

The TFP is integral to ensuring that SNAP can help families provide healthful and nutritious food for their children. The plan is used to calculate the cost of feeding a family by accounting for nutrients in food, the cost of food, and science-based dietary guidelines so that children on SNAP can eat a diet that minimizes their risk of disease later in life. It analyzes the cost of a “market basket,” meant to represent an average family’s grocery list, and makes SNAP allotment determinations based on this value. Importantly, dietary science and guidelines often change the makeup of the TFP to meet children’s nutritional needs. Your proposal would not allow these crucial updates to be implemented if there is any additional cost, creating a program that is knowingly unable to meet the needs of the impoverished children it serves.

The TFP update in 2021 made significant strides in reducing food insecurity and poverty among children. Research shows that the update alone lifted an additional 8.6% of children receiving SNAP out of poverty. Prior to the previous update, the “market basket” had not been updated in nearly 50 years — meaning that SNAP allotments were only increased based on inflation. However, labor availability, climate change, and other complications are consistently driving food prices up far beyond inflation.

Rejecting the need for an adequate TFP update is rejecting the importance of America’s economic and health stability. It is shortsighted and costly. The impact on children will be the most acute. We urge you to reconsider your proposal and draft a Farm Bill that ensures that children in the wealthiest country in the world don’t have to go without the most basic of needs. We look forward to working with you to pass a Farm Bill that strengthens children’s chances at a happy and healthy life.

Sincerely,

First Focus Campaign for Children

Child & Student Nutrition Alliance

Alexandria House

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

AssistHub

California Association of Food Banks

California Competes

CCRWO

Center for Healthy Communities

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Child Welfare League of America
CivicMakers, LLC
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County
Community Services Unlimited
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food for People
Franciscan Action Network
GLIDE
Interfaith Power and Light
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Women International
Kidzapalooza
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Disability Institute
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National League for Nursing
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women's Law Center
Nebraska Appleseed
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nourish California
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

RESULTS

River City Food Bank

Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services

San Francisco-Marin Food Bank

Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

The Resource Connection Food Bank

The Workers Lab

UnidosUS

Union for Reform Judaism

United Church of Christ

Voices for Progress

ZERO TO THREE