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April 17, 2018

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman
U.S House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway & Ranking Member Peterson:

On behalf of our members and all Americans age 50 and older, I am writing to urge you to modify H.R.2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, to avoid the negative impact the current bill would have on the millions of Americans, including older Americans, who rely on the Supplementation Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). AARP, with its nearly 38 million members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as health care, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

The changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) included in H.R. 2 will put at risk the critical food and nutrition assistance for 43 million Americans who depend on this program. In 2016, 8.7 million SNAP households had at least one adult age 50 or older. As we stated in a letter sent to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on April 10, 2018, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical part of the safety net available to low-income families, including many older Americans and people with disabilities. It has been shown that

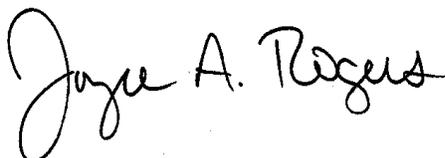
participating in SNAP can lead to improvements in a household's food security status, especially for those with very low food security.ⁱ

Categorical eligibility is essential to improving access to SNAP for low-income Americans of all ages and must be protected, as was done in the last farm bill. Categorical eligibility advances the goals of simplifying administration, easing entry to the program for eligible households, emphasizing coordination among low-income assistance programs, and reducing the potential for errors in establishing eligibility for benefits.ⁱⁱ Individuals who have already undergone determinations for programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) bypass the income and resource tests and have their SNAP benefits approved. This streamlined process leads to individuals receiving their SNAP benefits faster and reduces the number of individuals who may be facing hunger.

Most individuals who receive SNAP benefits and are required to work already do work. Unfortunately, those individuals who are not working are likely to have chronic health conditions, which prevent them from holding employment. Over 1.7 million low-income older workers have a health difficulty.ⁱⁱⁱ Expanding work requirements for SNAP would be especially burdensome for older workers ages 50-59. Workers ages 50 and older typically take longer than younger workers to find employment after being unemployed. Denying individual's access to SNAP benefits for up to three years for not being able to comply with tougher work requirements could increase food insecurity and likely have negative consequences on health. One recent study showed how healthcare and food insecurity causes are inexorably linked, finding the risk for hospital admissions for low blood sugar spike 27 percent in the last week of the month as compared to the first week of the month when food and SNAP budgets of low-income populations have often been exhausted.^{iv}

We urge you, as this bill heads into mark-up, to protect the critical assistance that SNAP provides and preserve the program's ability to carry out its important mission in providing nutrition to America's vulnerable populations. We ask you to work in a bi-partisan manner, bringing all perspectives to the table, and prioritizing the needs of the individuals being served. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me, or have your staff contact Megan O'Reilly, Director of our Government Affairs Health and Family team at 202-434-6987.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joyce A. Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joyce A. Rogers
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs

ⁱ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Measuring2013.pdf>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Congress, House Committee on Agriculture, report to accompany H.R. 2100, 99th Cong., 1st session, September 13, 1985, H. Rept. 99-271, Part 1 (Washington: GPO, 1985), p.142

ⁱⁱⁱ Mikelson. Kelly S.; Kuehn, Daniel and Caughey-Martin, Ananda. Occupational Projections for Low-Income Older Workers, Executive Summary. April 2017

^{iv} <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/33/1/116.full.pdf+html>