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Starvation is Bad for Your Health

Urge Congress to Retain Food Stamp Benefits for Those in Need!

Hunger presents numerous barriers to good health, worsening health conditions and complicating effective treatment. Nutrition programs such as SNAP (food stamps) can combat hunger and are an essential component of the safety net for low-income individuals and families. Unfortunately, Congress is currently debating whether to deny SNAP benefits for millions of currently eligible households, many of whom are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

As health care providers and as advocates, it is our duty to speak out against these cruel and short-sighted cuts. We must illustrate how denying SNAP benefits will harm the health and stability of those who are homeless (or close to it), **making the sick sicker, the poor poorer, and our jobs as providers more difficult. Join advocates and concerned citizens TODAY for a nationwide call-in day to oppose these cuts.**

TAKE ACTION

The Farm Bill Conference Committee has been meeting for several weeks to resolve the significant differences between the House and Senate Farm Bills (the Farm Bill authorizes SNAP, among numerous other agriculture policies). The House Bill includes nearly **\$40 billion in cuts to SNAP** and House negotiators are aiming to include as many of these reductions in the final Farm Bill Conference Report as possible. The HCH Community must speak out NOW and oppose these cuts.

Call 1-888-398-8702 toll-free to be connected to your members of Congress. Deliver the simple message that you oppose cuts to SNAP and urge them to speak to their leadership and oppose cuts to SNAP. Use the following talking points to support your position:

- SNAP cuts will harm the health and stability of those experiencing homelessness. Use the new [SNAP Fact Sheet](#) from the National HCH Council for more information.
- If you are a health care provider, point this out and use your professional experiences to bolster your credibility.
- Use personal stories from your experiences to illustrate how SNAP benefits help the most vulnerable. Explain how homelessness and inadequate nutrition interact and harm health.
- One provision aims to deny benefits to certain groups of unemployed people. Describe the difficulties you or your clients have had in obtaining employment and oppose provisions that punish those unable to find work.

Nutrition is a basic need and essential to good health. Use your experiences in homeless health care to protect SNAP and keep the sick from getting sicker!

Background

The differences between the House and Senate Bills are considerable. The House cuts \$40 billion over ten years, denying benefits to nearly 4 million people. The Senate cuts \$4 billion over ten years. These cuts would come on top of a \$5 billion cut in FY14 because a temporary increase in SNAP benefits provided in the ARRA legislation (the stimulus bill passed in 2009) has expired. Please read these resources from our partners at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for more information on the [House cuts](#) and the [ARRA cuts](#).

The process for resolving the differences in the House and Senate Bills will require the Farm Bill Conference Committee to pass a Conference Report which must then pass

both the House and Senate. There is significant opposition to the SNAP program, so Democratic and Republican Senators and Representatives alike need to hear our message. If a Conference Report is not reached and passed, the SNAP program will continue without any additional cuts into the new year but future attempts to reform and cut SNAP would be likely.

Some of the opposition to SNAP comes from the rather dramatic increase in SNAP spending in recent years. SNAP is supposed to increase when recessions hit, so this increase in spending is by design. SNAP spending will decrease as economic conditions improve. Another source of opposition to SNAP comes from the perception that there is widespread waste, fraud, and abuse. This perception is incorrect. The SNAP program (like most safety net programs) is actually quite efficient and includes numerous safeguards and program integrity provisions. Advocates are advised to combat the perception that SNAP is wasteful with examples of how needy many SNAP recipients truly are.

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