



February 6, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Senator, State of California
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
Senator, State of California
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear California Senators Padilla and Butler, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Collins, Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to urge that you reject any efforts promoting a policy of limiting food choice in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Specifically, as you finalize your work on the Fiscal Year 2024 bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, the undersigned California-based organizations are unified in our strong opposition to the inclusion of \$2 million for five pilot projects that would restrict SNAP purchases in SEC 739 of the House Agriculture Appropriations bill.

SNAP is the country’s most important anti-hunger program and the nutritional benefits of this program have been well documented. It has also been well documented that the best way to improve the nutrition of low-income households is to reduce stigma in the current program and to increase the benefits provided in the program. This proposal endeavors to do neither. ¹

Furthermore, SNAP does not only benefit families that participate in the program, it provides an essential revenue for grocers and retailers and it creates jobs for workers in the food chain. SNAP benefits, redeemed through the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system, allow recipients to purchase

¹ For a more detailed explanation of why anti-poverty advocates have long been unified in opposing this purportedly well meaning policy, see this position paper issued by Western Center on Law and Poverty (2018): https://wclp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SNAP_Food_Choice_Restrictions_White_Paper_WCLP_August2018.pdf

food at the retailer Point of Sale (POS) without differential treatment or discrimination. Policies that promote changes to this current system, not only endanger this ease of shopping for people already burdened with poverty, they also threaten to complicate a POS system that retailers and grocers and their employees rely on to work seamlessly. We should not lose ground on the efficiencies that have been added to SNAP and the dignity it provides to SNAP recipients since the advent of the EBT system. What's more, to consider doing so while grocers and retailers are combating retail theft and state and federal SNAP administering agencies are struggling to get a step ahead of EBT skimming rings perpetrated by international organized criminals, would be obtuse.

As you finalize your work on the FY24 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we encourage you to maintain the long-held policy position of retailers, grocers, workers and advocates alike, that SNAP recipients should be allowed to make their food purchasing decisions based on the needs of their family, and not based on a list made by lawmakers in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

California Association of Food Banks

California Grocers Association

California Retailers Association

County Welfare Directors Association of California

End Poverty In California

GRACE/End Child Poverty California

Hunger Action Los Angeles

United Food and Commercial Workers Western States Council

CC:

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker Mike Johnson
Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
Sen. Martin Heinrich
Sen. John Hoeven
Rep. Andy Harris
Rep. Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Rep. Pete Aguilar
Rep. David Valadao