

May 3, 2018

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Poliquin
U.S. House of Representatives
1208 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pingree and Representative Poliquin:

As organizations concerned about hunger in Maine, we write to ask you to reject any proposals to make cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or shift funds away from food assistance, which would undermine the ability of low-income Mainers and families throughout the nation to meet their basic nutrition needs.

We are particularly concerned about the recently-introduced Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, H.R. 2. In a stark departure from previous Farm Bills, H.R. 2 takes a partisan approach that proposes deep and harmful cuts to SNAP and shifts funds away from food assistance. Our specific concerns, including the elimination of categorical eligibility and the “heat and eat” streamlined eligibility process, harsh child support provisions, and the imposition of unworkable time limits and work requirements are detailed in the attached memo. It will surely limit Mainers’ ability to put food on their tables, add costly administrative burdens, worsen health outcomes, and hurt local grocers from Calais to Cumberland.

SNAP is our nation’s most effective anti-hunger program. When Mainers are able to cover a basic need like putting food on the table, they can get back on their feet more quickly during difficult times. That’s how SNAP kept more than 47,000 Mainers out of poverty—including nearly 16,000 children—each year between 2009 and 2012.

SNAP currently assists one in seven Mainers, 180,000 people—many who are struggling with disability, retired and living on fixed incomes, have lost their jobs, or need a little extra help to get by in hard times. Sixty-two percent of Maine SNAP participants live in households with children. More than one in four SNAP households includes a Mainer aged 60 or older. SNAP is especially important in Maine given our high rate of food insecurity—currently seventh highest in the nation. More than one in five Maine children live with food insecurity. Even worse, Maine ranks third from the bottom for very low food security—these are Mainers struggling with chronic hunger.

Moreover, SNAP is vital to our economy and to the more than 1,500 retailers, including many in rural areas, that participate in the SNAP program. SNAP injects more than \$250 million dollars directly into Maine’s economy annually. Every five dollars in SNAP spending generates around \$9 in economic activity, according to the USDA.

The proposed, partisan House Farm Bill puts Maine families and our economy at risk. The Chairman's bill as written would fundamentally alter SNAP's core purpose to safeguard the nation's health and wellbeing by helping to feed hungry Americans.

SNAP is a vital part of Maine's social safety net. It makes it possible for nearly one in seven Mainers to better meet their nutritional needs. It supports hundreds of retailers and strengthens Maine's economy. For all these reasons, the 69 organizations listed below, urge you to oppose any proposals, including those in the recently released Farm Bill, to make cuts or harmful changes to SNAP.

Thank you for hearing our concerns about hunger in our state and for your continued work on behalf of all Mainers.

Sincerely,

AIO Food Pantry and Emergency Assistance

Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

Amistad

AMVETS Department of Maine

Bar Harbor Food Pantry

Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services

Chaplaincy Institute of Maine

Chebeague United Methodist Church

Cobscook Friends (Quaker) Meeting

Community Concepts Inc

Community Housing of Maine

Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Cumberland County Food Security Council

Episcopal Diocese of Maine

Etz Chaim Synagogue

Food and Medicine

Frannie Peabody Center

FUMC Community Meal Bangor, ME

Gateway Community Services Maine

Good Shepherd Food Bank

Grace - Street Ministry

Homeless Advocacy for All

Homeless Voices for Justice

Hope Acts

HopeGateWay

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
Knox County Homeless Coalition
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Maine Community Action Association
Maine Council of Churches
Maine Council on Aging
Maine Equal Justice Partners
Maine Family Planning
Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets
Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalitions
Maine Military & Community Network - Portland
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maine People's Resource Center
Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center
Maine Women's Lobby
Making It Home
Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services
Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program
Midcoast Friends Meeting
Moral Movement Maine
New England Arab American Organization
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
New Ventures Maine
Orono Friends Meeting
Preble Street
SeniorsPlus
Shalom House, Inc.
South Sudanese Community of Maine
Southern Maine Workers' Center
St. Paul's Church
State Street Church United Church of Christ
Survivor Speak USA
Tedford Housing
Temple Beth El, Augusta

The First Parish in Portland Maine
Through These Doors
Tuttle Road United Methodist Church
Wayside Food Programs
Wesley by the Sea Faith-Based Action for Justice
Winthrop Center Friends (Quakers) Church