

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
U.S. Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schumer, McConnell, Murray, and Collins,

On behalf of the Child and Student Nutrition Alliance and the undersigned national, state, and local organizations, we are writing to express our opposition to the so-called “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Choice” pilots and urge the Senate to reject any policy riders that harm nutrition programs that are vital to the health and well-being of America’s children. The SNAP Choice pilot proposal is not related to the funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Senate must choose to both fully fund WIC and reject this harmful policy rider.

Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP benefits go directly to children. Any effort to restrict SNAP access directly and profoundly impacts children and their food and nutrition security. To issue these restrictions as low-income families struggle to make ends meet and grocery prices soar is short sighted and tragic. Furthermore, policing the grocery carts of parents who are simply trying to put food on their children’s tables is stigmatizing, ineffective at improving health outcomes, and a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Research shows that SNAP participants are no more likely to buy unhealthy or junk foods than the average American. The idea that parents on SNAP are incapable of making their own healthy decisions for their children plays into the demeaning stereotypes falsely placed on SNAP recipients. 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 nutrition assistance, is proven to contribute to developmental delays, poor immune functioning, and worsened mental health outcomes. Additionally, the U.S. has no system to deem foods healthy or unhealthy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has repeatedly rejected proposals for this system as too complex and costly.

While the private sector has made historic investments in reducing childhood hunger this week as part of the White House Challenge to End Hunger and Building Healthy Communities, Congress has been unable to fully fund even the most basic of children's nutrition programs. Lawmakers who aimed to slash WIC's fruit and vegetable benefits now claim to care about children's access to healthy foods by implementing the SNAP Choice pilot, but both are draconian cuts to children's nutrition programs that play a crucial role in their healthy development. Some lawmakers have suggested that SNAP Choice be implemented as a way to fully fund WIC. **The funding for WIC is in no way related to funding for SNAP.** Any suggestion that one must be traded for the other is completely false. Policymakers have a responsibility to keep America's children fed and ensure their long-term health and success.

Children's health and nutrition assistance has been at risk for far too long. We urge the Senate to fully fund WIC to protect the health of our nation's new mothers and babies and to oppose any and all cuts to SNAP.

Sincerely,

AFT

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

California Association of Food Banks

California Competes

California WIC Association

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Central California Food Bank

Child & Student Nutrition Alliance

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Institute

Coalition on Human Needs

Coastside Farmers' Markets, Inc

Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County

Community Food Bank of San Benito County

Community Services Unlimited Inc.

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Educate. Advocate.

Feeding Colorado

FIND Food Bank

First 5 CA

First Focus on Children

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
Food for People
Food Research and Action Center
Food Share of Ventura County
Futures Without Violence
GLIDE
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Heluna Health
Hunger Free Colorado
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Family Service LA
Jewish Women International
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Marin Country Mart Farmers Market
Mar Vista Farmers Market Association
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women-California
National Diaper Bank Network
National Disability Institute
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National League for Nursing
Nebraska Appleseed
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nourish California
Nourish Colorado
OC Food Bank - Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Parent Voices, California
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Redwood Empire Food Bank
Roots of Change
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
Save the Children
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County
Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, IA

The Gubbio Project
The Salvador E. Alvarez Institute for Non-Violence
United Food and Commercial Workers Western States Council
United Ways of California
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College
Urban Strategies Council
Westside Food Bank
What We All Deserve
Yolo Food Bank
ZERO TO THREE