

June 21, 2018

Dear Members of the Senate,

As pediatricians and public health researchers with the non-partisan organization Children's HealthWatch, we write to express our position on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Nutrition title of the Farm Bill based on our research and expertise. SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity. We appreciate the Senate Agriculture Committee's bipartisan bill that reauthorizes SNAP and improves some of the program's integrity and operations. We urge you to stay on a path towards a Farm Bill that does not cut or make changes to SNAP that would endanger the health and well-being of America's children and families.

SNAP is important medicine.<sup>1</sup> Decades of research, including our own, demonstrates that SNAP is an effective tool for reducing food insecurity and hunger and improving health across the lifespan, beginning during pregnancy and early childhood.<sup>2,3</sup> SNAP decreases the likelihood that a young child will be sick, underweight, or developmentally at risk – thus preventing conditions that cost this country billions each year. SNAP is also a fundamental component of America's public health and economic infrastructure that sustains families when basic expenses overtake earnings or when confronted with adversity such as natural disasters, unexpected disability or death.

While we would advocate that SNAP be further strengthened through increased allotments and updates to the SNAP calculation, we are gratified that the Senate Agriculture Committee did not propose cuts to this critical program. The streamlining of requirements and modernization of the program will help to ensure families have access to SNAP benefits to afford food and support their family's health.

Unlike the Senate Farm Bill, the House proposal would end or cut benefits to over 2 million people in over 1 million households. We are very concerned about the House bill because our research shows that reductions in SNAP benefits mean worse health outcomes for children.<sup>4</sup> The SNAP boost during the recession made a difference to families with young children: after it was rolled back these families were 17 percent more likely to be household and child food insecure. SNAP makes a difference. At a time when 13 million children (nearly 1 in 6 children) are living in food insecure households we believe that SNAP should be strengthened, not cut.

The future of our nation and our economy depend on the healthy growth and development of our nation's children. Passing a Farm Bill that promotes current and future opportunity by ensuring adequate nutrition for parents and children of all ages is critical. As you prepare to

consider this bill on the Senate Floor, we recommend focusing on SNAP's goal of reducing food insecurity and hunger by using evidence-based approaches to strengthening SNAP.\*

Sincerely,



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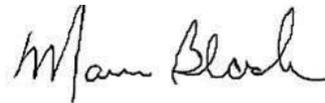
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[Children's HealthWatch](http://childrenshealthwatch.org) is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy and child health experts committed to improving children's health in America. Every day, in urban hospitals across the country, we collect data on children ages zero to four who are from families experiencing economic hardship. We analyze and release our findings to academics, legislators, and the

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\* For a complete list of Children's HealthWatch's Farm Bill priorities, visit <http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAP-Farm-Bill-Priorities-2018.pdf>

public to inform public policies and practices that can give all children equal opportunities for healthy, successful lives.

For questions or further information, contact Allison Bovell-Ammon, Deputy Director of Policy Strategy for Children's HealthWatch at [allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org](mailto:allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org) or 617-414-3580.

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<sup>1</sup> Ettinger de Cuba S, Weiss I, Pasquariello J, Schiffmiller A, Frank DA, Coleman S, Breen A, Cook J. The SNAP Vaccine: Boosting Children's Health. Children's HealthWatch, February 2012. Available at: [http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/snapvaccine\\_report\\_feb12.pdf](http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/snapvaccine_report_feb12.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Almond D, Hoynes HW, Schanzenbach DW. Inside the war on poverty: The impact of food stamps on birth outcomes. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*. 2011;93(2):387-403.

<sup>3</sup> Hoynes H, Schanzenbach DW, Almond D. Long-run impacts of childhood access to the safety net. *The American Economic Review*. 2016;106(4):903-934.

<sup>4</sup> Ettinger de Cuba S, Bovell-Ammons A, Coleman S, Frank DA, Diluting the Dose. Children's HealthWatch, September 2015. Available at: <http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Diluting-the-Dose-for-web-.pdf>