

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2012

Honorable Frank Lucas
Chair
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson,

We are writing as members of the California delegation to respectfully request that the Committee protect the current level of funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the 2012 Farm Bill, as well as maintain SNAP's current structure, eligibility requirements, and benefit levels.

As members of Congress, we recognize and understand the difficult budgetary decisions before you and the importance of achieving savings through common sense reforms. However, Congress has had a long-standing bipartisan commitment to protecting low-income safety net programs, and we urge you to uphold that essential commitment.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is the cornerstone food assistance program for low-income households in America. In 2011, SNAP afforded almost 45 million low-income Americans a nutritionally sufficient diet that otherwise would have been impossible. In California, 40 percent of low-income adults struggle with food insecurity, and in a number of counties this number is higher than 50 percent. Nearly four million Californians depend on SNAP for their health and well-being.

In today's economic climate, SNAP has never been more important. As we gradually recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, millions of families still struggle with hunger and poverty. When poverty and unemployment rates grew substantially from 2007 to 2011, SNAP responded quickly as more families qualified for food assistance. In fact, according to the National Academy of Science poverty measures, SNAP kept about 4 million people out of poverty in 2010, including 1.3 million children out of deep poverty, and greatly diminished the severity of need for millions of others.

SNAP also has one of the most rigorous quality control systems of any public benefit program as well as low administrative costs, with nearly 95 percent of federal spending going directly to beneficiaries to purchase food. It is an effective form of economic stimulus, growing the economy by \$1.73 for every \$1.00 invested.

Due to the effectiveness of SNAP, we strongly oppose both the House Agriculture Committee's reconciliation proposal to cut \$33 billion from the program, and the House budget proposal that would cut SNAP by \$133 billion over the next decade and convert it to a block grant. Converting

SNAP into a block grant would result in reduced or eliminated benefits for millions of SNAP households. It would also keep the program from being able to expand to add participants should their income drop from job loss or a reduction in work hours.

We similarly oppose the Senate's recent actions to cut \$4.49 billion from the program by limiting states' abilities to operate "Heat and Eat" policies. In 2013, California is primed to implement a newly adopted "Heat and Eat" initiative, which will provide SNAP households with a nominal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit. Coordinating these benefits enables states to efficiently and effectively increase access and participation in both LIHEAP and SNAP programs. Conversely, to limit this option, as the Senate has proposed, ultimately forces some struggling Americans to face a difficult choice between meals on the table or energy for their home. These cuts will create paperwork inefficiencies on behalf of both applicants and administrators, discourage qualified individuals from entitled benefits, and ultimately jeopardize assistance to as many as 200,000 households which would see an average increase in benefits of about \$43 per month. Seniors, individuals with disabilities, residents of rural communities, and others for whom verification of utility costs can be difficult would be harmed by these administrative changes.

Reducing SNAP benefits wrongly places the burdens of deficit reduction on those who can afford it least. With food banks already stretched thin and unable to make up the difference, cuts to vital food assistance programs such as SNAP will only serve to deepen the effects of poverty throughout the nation, limit purchasing power for millions of struggling Americans, and harm an already fragile economic recovery.

We look forward to working with you to pass a fiscally responsible Farm Bill that strengthens the SNAP program and supports our nation's families, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities. Maintaining these benefits will encourage economic growth, create jobs, lift beneficiaries from poverty and ensure that California continues to improve participation and access to nutrition assistance programs.


Sincerely,



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress



SAM FARR
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



JANICE HAHN
Member of Congress



PETE STARK
Member of Congress



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JOE BACA
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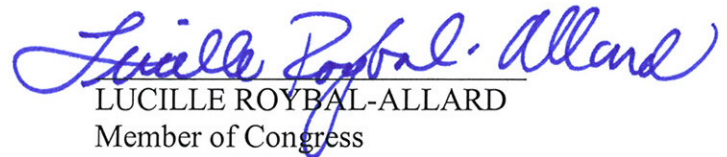
HENRY A. WAXMAN
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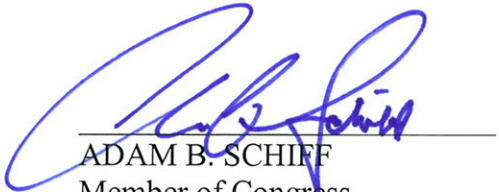
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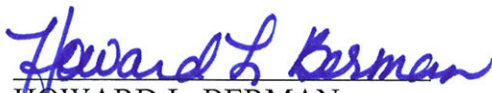
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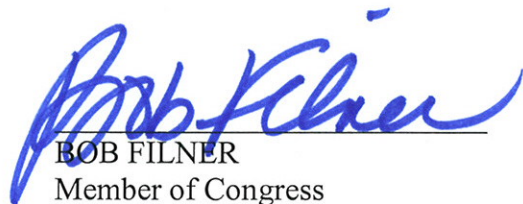
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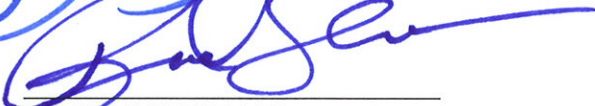
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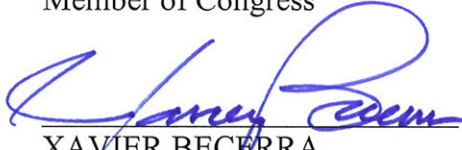
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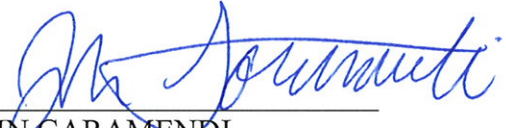
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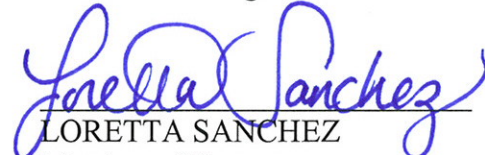
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