

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Opening Statement

Chairman Raja Krishnamoorthi

## “A Threat to America’s Children: The Trump Administration’s Proposed Changes to Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program”

Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

Thursday, February 6, 2020

Every child deserves the chance to grow up healthy. Children shouldn’t have to worry about where their next meal will come from. That’s an unimaginable burden for a young person that can deprive them of their childhood.

Food insecurity hurts children’s academic outcomes, their ability to pay attention, and their behavior. It has *long-term* impacts on physical and mental health and even depresses lifetime earnings.

As Dr. Martin Luther King said in 1964: “There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we have the resources to get rid of it.” That same year, we enacted the precursor to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – or SNAP.

America still has the resources to address poverty, and the ability to lift up society’s most vulnerable so they can achieve the American dream. SNAP is one of our best tools for that. It provides moderate assistance to help feed Americans in need – on average only \$1.43 per meal for participants and nearly 70 percent of households receiving SNAP benefits have children.

But SNAP doesn’t just help feed children, the elderly, and the disabled that make up two-thirds of its participants- it also boosts the economy more than any other government program. According to Moody’s, every dollar of SNAP benefits increases GDP by \$1.73. That’s an incredible return on investment.

And SNAP creates jobs: according to USDA, every \$10,000 in SNAP benefits creates one full-time rural job, and approximately every \$25,000 in SNAP benefits creates one full-time urban job. SNAP dollars are quickly spent on food necessities and flow into local businesses, ultimately support trucking and farm jobs.

So, this program designed to feed children, the elderly, and the disabled, also boosts our economy and creates jobs. And as this Committee is responsible for combatting waste, fraud and abuse, it’s worth noting that SNAP-related fraud is almost non-existent.

SNAP also gives states flexibility to tailor the program to their citizens’ needs. First, it incentivizes work by allowing states to ease income eligibility limits so that someone doesn’t have to turn down work to

maintain SNAP eligibility as they get back on their feet. Second, SNAP allows states to let citizens own a car to get to work or to save for an emergency like surprise medical bills.

The Administration wants to disarm states of both of these tools. In doing so, it will strip 3.1 million households of their SNAP benefits including more than 2 million with children. It also strips free lunch enrollment from nearly one million kids. For those children, the Trump Administration's policy would take food out of their mouths at home and at school. How can we expect those kids to succeed?

The Administration needs to abandon this proposal. As the late Chairman Elijah Cummings would have said: "We're better than this."

We know what a difference SNAP makes for families and children who would otherwise go hungry.

*I know* from personal experience.

I came to United States from India with my parents when I was 3 months old so my father could pursue his education, and our family could embrace the opportunities that America has to offer.

Despite my parents' best efforts, it wasn't easy. When we needed help, we were able to receive food stamps as my parents worked their way out of that difficult time. Today, my father is an engineering professor, my brother is a doctor, and I am fortunate to represent Illinois' 8<sup>th</sup> congressional district in Congress and to Chair this Subcommittee.

That was my family's American dream and it was possible because of my parents' hard work, but also because of the opportunities our country presents.

An American President once told Congress, "that hunger and malnutrition persist in a land such as ours is embarrassing and intolerable." That President was Richard Nixon. If President Nixon and Dr. King could agree on the importance of fighting hunger all those decades ago, surely, we can find common ground today to continue Congress' strong support for SNAP.

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