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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement of Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi
Joint Subcommittee on Healthcare, Benefits and Administrative Rules and
Intergovernmental Affairs
“Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Fraud”
September 26, 2018

Thank you, to our witnesses for being here today and to you Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is America's primary anti-hunger program. In 2017, the SNAP program fed over 42 million Americans who face hunger and food insecurity.

In my state of Illinois in Fiscal Year 2016, SNAP provided about \$3.04 billion dollars in food benefits to a monthly average of over one million people. I am proud to say that the program served 100 percent of those eligible for benefits in 2015.

In my district, over 50% of the households that receive SNAP benefits have a child or several children under the age of 18 years.

SNAP is vital to American children: no other nutrition or income support program reaches as many at-risk children or contributes as much to helping very low-income households with children. The average SNAP benefit is \$1.40 per person per family, and every federal dollar spent on SNAP generates \$1.79 in economic activity. In 2015, SNAP lifted more than two million children out of extreme poverty, and kept an additional 8.4 million Americans out of poverty.

As a former SNAP recipient myself, I take very seriously the issue of fraud in the SNAP program. The 2017 rate of 6.3% of improper payments is very troubling, and Congress has an oversight duty to ensure that USDA and state authorities are doing everything in their power to ensure that all SNAP-eligible families are able to access the program free of fraud.

The only acceptable rate of SNAP fraud is 0%. Any fraud in the program means taking away food from those who need it.

As we work to eliminate SNAP fraud, we have to make certain that any proposed fixes do not result in more harm to children and families by reducing eligibility or making it harder for families to get the food they need.

It is possible to eliminate SNAP fraud without reducing the number of eligible people who receive food. In fact, this is the only moral way to reduce fraud.

SNAP is, fundamentally, a health program. It promotes healthy children, well-fed families, and better health outcomes for communities as a whole. As such, we should keep the first commandment of healthcare in mind when addressing SNAP: "First, to do no harm."

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will spend today's hearing trying to justify cutting the SNAP program. Their proposals, whether by design or by accident, would result in hungry children and families forced to decide between paying for food or other basic necessities.

The Republican Farm Bill would create administrative barriers to enrollment by significantly changing policy that automatically enrolls households in SNAP when they qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

It would increase requirements for SNAP beneficiaries and would impose new work reporting requirements on top of current requirements.

Reading their bill, one could be forgiven for assuming that the whole aim of these provisions is to cut the number of people who may receive SNAP benefits.

SNAP feeds millions of children, seniors, people with disabilities—including veterans. SNAP is efficiently run. If SNAP did not exist, we would have to create a program to do what SNAP does.

Thank you.

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