

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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Opening Statement
Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Healthcare, Benefits and Administrative Rules
Joint Hearing on “Program Integrity in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program”

May 9, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

I would like this Committee to help improve how the government serves the American people.

We should start by recognizing the enormously important public service provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

SNAP feeds 42 million Americans who face hunger and food insecurity. In my own district, SNAP provides meals to nearly 28,000 households. In Fiscal Year 2014, 69% of SNAP participants were families with children.

SNAP is vital to America’s low-income 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.

SNAP’s value far exceeds its cost. This year, for households in the program, SNAP costs just \$262.72 per household per year. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, SNAP averages just \$1.40 per person per meal. These meals are crucial to sustaining them.

I know what I am talking about, because I have personal experience with SNAP’s predecessor – the Food Stamp program.

I came to our country with my family when I was three months old so my father could continue his education and our family could embrace all the opportunities of America. But despite my family’s best efforts, it wasn’t easy and there was struggle. When my family needed help, the American people provided it.

And today, my father is an engineering professor, my brother is a doctor, and I am honored to represent the people of Illinois’ 8th district. That’s the American dream: the promise of a middle-class life with the opportunity for your children to have an even better life than you did.

That dream was possible for my family because of my parents’ hard work and the opportunities our county makes possible. But it was also because the American people

established programs like SNAP so my family could be temporarily sustained in times of severe need.

For families like mine and millions of others, SNAP and its predecessors have served as a critical social safety net and allowed us to bounce back from financial adversity.

I believe that we must root out any fraud, waste, or abuse in SNAP and other government programs. According to United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service in Fiscal Year 2014, 3.66% of SNAP benefit issuance was improper payments.

I should say any amount of fraud, waste and abuse is too much. That's why I believe that the goal of our oversight should be to eliminate the small amount of improper payments in the SNAP program, and every other government expenditure.

But I strongly disagree with any attempt to exploit that common ground to justify severe cuts to our nation's premier anti-hunger program that serves millions of women, men, children, seniors, and disabled Americans.

I believe firmly that the best anti-poverty program ever created is a J-O-B, but I also believe that it is wrong to allow our most vulnerable citizens to go hungry.

I hope that the witnesses today will shed light on how to improve SNAP program integrity, without building greater barriers to helping Americans who would go hungry.

Thank you and I look forward to your testimony.

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