



HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

FARM BILL: CLAIM VS FACT ON SNAP

CLAIM: SNAP is temporary. The average family spends just ten months on SNAP, receiving assistance only during difficult times.

FACT: We don't know how long families are on SNAP. USDA doesn't have any information to track individuals enrolled in SNAP or their tenure on the program. Currently, USDA uses a survey of just one-quarter of one percent of SNAP households (47,000 of 21,800,000 households) to gather information about SNAP recipients. The farm bill requires states to collect and submit SNAP data to USDA to observe the length of time a recipient is on the program, which will help lawmakers better understand the challenges of the system and write policy to meet the needs of program participants.

CLAIM: The vast majority of those on SNAP who are required to work, do work.

FACT: There are approximately 3.5 million households with an individual subject to the existing Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) work requirement. Among this group, only 30% are actually working. For those in need of training and education to help them find employment, the farm bill makes a significant investment in their futures.

CLAIM: Eliminating Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) will strip SNAP benefits from 400,000 eligible households.

FACT: BBCE was broadly used by the previous administration to make households eligible for SNAP via their receipt of—or authorization to receive—a TANF-funded brochure, hotline number, etc. Individuals do not need to meet any asset test to be waived into the program.

While the farm bill eliminates the automatic eligibility provided by BBCE, anyone meeting the asset and income eligibility tests will remain eligible for SNAP. Importantly, the farm bill updates the values used in the asset test, many of which had not been changed since the 1970s. Those values are indexed for inflation going forward.

CLAIM: Eliminating Broad Base Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) increases administrative costs, time and errors.

FACT: Eliminating BBCE prevents the receipt of SNAP by individuals just because they receive a brochure or a hotline number; no administrative efficiency justifies that lack of program integrity. The farm bill retains both traditional and narrow categorical eligibility, allowing eligibility for those receiving cash assistance or participating in an income-tested assistance program. Eligibility for SNAP is justified for individuals who are receiving meaningful benefits via these other programs.

CLAIM: Requiring recipients to produce actual documentation of all utility costs reverts the program back to an antiquated system.

FACT: Program integrity is not an antiquated expectation. Many states engage in dubious practices to increase SNAP benefits to recipients of heating and cooling assistance, providing a deduction that effectively boosts benefits to households that do not even have heating and cooling costs. The farm bill requires that for non-elderly households, heating and cooling costs must be documented in order for the household to receive the standard utility allowance for those costs.

CLAIM: Proposed modifications to SNAP will reduce benefits by \$20 billion over the next 10 years.

FACT: The nutrition title in the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 is budget-neutral; the claim that the program is reduced by \$20 billion is false. Improvements that bolster program integrity and reduce spending are matched with additional investment. For example, the farm bill provides a ten-percent increase in the earned income deduction for working households, guarantees transitional benefits for five months for households that are transitioning off TANF assistance, provides an effective increase in benefits for military households receiving the basic allowance for housing, and increases benefits through the incentives provided in the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program and the Retailer-Funded Incentive Pilot.

CLAIM: Mandatory work requirements will kick 1,000,000 SNAP recipients off the rolls.

FACT: No one is kicked off of SNAP due to mandatory work requirements. Anyone who leaves the program does so because 1) they obtain employment with sufficient income to no longer be eligible, or 2) they choose not to work or participate in a work or training program for at least 20 hours per week. Again, no one is forced off of SNAP due to work requirements.

CLAIM: SNAP already has strict work requirements.

FACT: Strict? Requirements? Insufficient, vague, and unenforceable work requirements—further undermined by states that find loopholes to waive individuals from participating—dissuade employment and restrict opportunities for recipients. Instead, the farm bill proposes realistic, supportive, and simplified work requirements paired with funding for states to provide guaranteed, improved, and constructive options to move participants toward improved wages, higher-quality employment, and independence.

CLAIM: Investments in SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) create a new, massive nationwide bureaucracy.

FACT: Investment in E&T is needed, and that investment will prepare SNAP recipients for getting good jobs. The farm bill provides an E&T slot for everyone who wants one, and states already have the framework in place, available through a combination of SNAP E&T, WIOA-funded programs, and other state programs. Under this proposal, states are granted the flexibility they need to provide services to best meet the needs of their state – no one-size-fits-all solution. SNAP E&T will leverage community colleges; state human resources services; apprenticeships; local, state, and national employers; and private contractors to provide services. These groups are not “bureaucracy”—they are willing and able partners who are excited about providing E&T services.

CLAIM: SNAP is a food program, not a jobs program.

FACT: SNAP is a vital lifeline for many Americans in need and this bill maintains assistance for those truly vulnerable. But, it's also important to ensure that SNAP is delivered in a way that gives work-capable adults an opportunity to improve their station in life.

CLAIM: 265,000 children will lose access to the National School Lunch Program because of the elimination of Broad Base Categorical Eligibility.

FACT: Under the BBCE loophole, those making significantly higher than the federal poverty level can qualify for SNAP (and for free school lunch). While H.R. 2 closes this loophole, anyone actually meeting the eligibility requirements will remain eligible for SNAP (and free school lunch). While CBO estimates that some families make too much income to actually qualify for SNAP going forward, most of those will still qualify for reduced-price school lunches.

CLAIM: Reporting requirements are too extensive for the Duplicative Enrollment Database, which matches state enrollments against one another to ensure duplicative benefits aren't being issued in multiple states.

FACT: This has already been successfully piloted in 5 states and is ready for nationwide implementation. Absent the Duplicative Enrollment Database, USDA has no means of tracking participation in SNAP. This change is absolutely necessary for bringing accountability to the administration of SNAP.

CLAIM: The jobs training programs will impose administrative burdens on states. Rural communities will particularly be impacted.

FACT: False. Those in rural communities deserve opportunities for job placement and advancement through access to E&T just like those in urban areas. If a community is not able to meet the needs of their recipients, the state can opt to use its available 15% exemption, or in cases of high unemployment, can seek a waiver for the area.

CLAIM: "Self-selecting to not participate in SNAP" is code for kicking people off of the program.

FACT: Work-capable individuals who are unable to find employment have two options: pursue an E&T opportunity at no cost to them, or remove themselves from the SNAP rolls. Eliminating disincentives to work is critical to ensuring a return on the significant investment in E&T. This bill also provides flexibility to individuals who may fall into extenuating circumstances through no fault of their own, with each state having the option to exempt up to 15% of its work population.

CLAIM: The work requirement program is an unfunded mandate. \$1 billion/year is not enough.

FACT: When we started this conversation, the Democrats said the proposal spent too much money. Now it doesn't spend enough. This is not an unfunded mandate; it is fully funded, allowing for additional investment in individuals who may need further assistance for an extended period of time. In fact, as a result of H.R. 2, the amount spent on E&T per recipient will

more than double.

CLAIM: The child support provision is a waste of resources.

FACT: Enforcing child support orders is certainly expensive, but it will increase resources for SNAP households with children to the tune of about \$5 billion per year. This provision puts children first, ensuring that parents are the first avenue of support before government intervention.

CLAIM: We should wait for the data from the job training pilots before imposing an expensive, untested mandated program.

FACT: When the E&T pilots were enacted in 2014 they were supposed to be wrapped up in three years. Unfortunately, some of the pilots will not be done until 2019, and the final reports will not be available until 2021. Under the backdrop of today's growing economy, it is time to forge ahead so that everyone can be provided an opportunity, not just a selected population in 10 states. The committee used the interim reports, talked to states administering them, and continued the conversations with other states to learn of best practices that help move people to sustainable and meaningful outcomes. While information gleaned from the pilots will lead to continued improvement in E&T, H.R. 2 authorizes the use of a variety of time-tested tools like supervised job search, apprenticeships, and subsidized employment. Waiting on the pilots to be completed simply prolongs the completely unacceptable status quo.

CLAIM: None of these changes were discussed in the three years, 21 hearings the committee held with over 80 witnesses.

FACT: Our bill is based on three years of work by the committee, including the testimony of more than 80 experts over the course of 21 hearings. Of course the bill text was not vetted at these hearings—it was drafted based on input received at the hearings. Here are a few examples of points that were essential to the policy development process:

"People getting public benefits need to know that they have to work as much as possible, and the government will make exceptions when it seems appropriate to do so, namely during recessions or high unemployment." – Ron Haskins, Past, Present and Future of SNAP: Breaking the Cycle, Oct. 27, 2015

"Case management comes in many different forms. One is to help navigate the person through the process of becoming engaged, and possibly becoming employed, but there is also retention case management and/or transitional benefit case management. And so it comes in different forms, and all of these are critical if a person is going to successfully make their way through to becoming more self-reliant." – Grant Collins, The Past Present, and Future of SNAP: The Means to Climbing the Economic Ladder, Jun. 10, 2015

"Where they're using this categorical eligibility... The Federal rule is 130 percent, but if your TANF is about that, that is what you may use... People in the same community basically being treated completely differently. In Texas, it is 165 percent. In Arizona, it is 185 percent. What sense does that make?" – Ranking Member Collin Peterson (MN-07), The Past, Present, and Future of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Feb. 25,

2015

“This last year we have learned that there is tremendous value in partnering with the Federal government on nutrition incentive programs. It demonstrates commitment to promoting healthy eating and reducing food insecurity. Because our pilot demonstrates the benefits of healthy eating and supporting local farmers, it allows us to partner and leverage support with stakeholders and funders in both the health and agriculture sectors.” – Ashton Wright, Hearing to Review Incentive Programs Aimed at Increasing Low-Income Families’ Purchasing Power for Fruits and Vegetables, Feb. 3, 2016

CLAIM: Sanctions against SNAP recipients if they do not meet the work requirements are too harsh. What about if someone has a sick kid, can’t get find a job with enough hours, personal emergency—they lose their benefits?

FACT: This bill provides flexibility to individuals who may fall into extenuating circumstances through no fault of their own. Each state may provide a temporary designation of “good cause,” which includes circumstances beyond the individual’s control, such as illness, illness of another household member, a household emergency, the unavailability of transportation, or the lack of adequate dependent care for children.

CLAIM: SNAP E&T programs will need \$1.2 billion/month in order to serve participants.

FACT: Including current participants, the \$1B per year provided by H.R. 2 will more than double the amount currently invested in each individual. While we can continue to debate additional funding, it should be obvious that a doubled investment is better than status quo.

CLAIM: H.R. 2 excludes the disabled from the requirement of households having to prove they have incurred a heating or cooling expense.

FACT: For vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities, states will have the flexibility to define how they will verify a household has incurred utility costs and will have the ability to make adjustments in those requirements. Bottom line: states have the ability to work with vulnerable populations to ensure this doesn’t become a “burdensome requirement.”

CLAIM: H.R. 2 creates a penalty for married couples on food stamps.

FACT: There is no marriage penalty in SNAP, neither in current law or in H.R. 2. Instead, the Farm Bill maintains that work requirements apply to any work-capable adult in a household. In H.R.2, married couples on SNAP are treated exactly the same as adults in any household on SNAP. Work-capable adults not caring for a child under age 6 must work or participate in employment and training. It’s simple. There is no reason adults who are married should circumvent the work requirement and miss out on the opportunity to build job skills and gain employment to better their lives for themselves, their spouse, and their children.