

July 11, 2013

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. If the program is weakened, millions of struggling parents, their children, and other vulnerable individuals will be harmed.

SNAP enrollment has grown tremendously in Pennsylvania since the onset of the recession in December 2007. In other words, **the program has responded exactly as intended in an economic downturn.** SNAP continues to provide critical nutrition support to more than 1.8 million Pennsylvanians, including nearly 725,000 children, offering a crucial bridge as our economy struggles to fully recover. Without SNAP, families throughout the commonwealth — a majority of whom are working but earn low wages — would be unable to put food on the table.

On July 11, 2013, the U.S. House of Representatives [voted 216-208](#) to pass a bill proposed by House leadership that separates agricultural support programs from SNAP and other nutrition supports funded through the farm bill, addressing each in two unconnected laws.

Some have suggested that adopting a “farm-only” farm bill without reauthorizing SNAP would actually help protect SNAP from harmful cuts and changes. Unfortunately, the exact opposite is true; separating SNAP from its historic link with agriculture programs in a farm bill virtually guarantees much greater risks to SNAP.

- SNAP is an important agriculture program that boosts demand for farm produce, helping to keep our nation's farms strong.
- SNAP is important to both rural and urban communities, a combined farm bill unites lawmakers from rural and urban states who each have a great interest in its success. The coalition working in support of the farm bill has been a model of bipartisanship and compromise, all too rare in Washington.
- A SNAP-only bill would be a target for cuts on top of benefit reductions already scheduled to take place this November and would leave the program open to harmful changes intended to substantially reduce its effectiveness. House Republicans have signaled their intention to slash the program three times by passing the Ryan budget, which would reduce the program by \$135 billion.
- The Senate has already passed a comprehensive farm bill. If the House splits its farm bill, it would be very difficult to find a compromise between the House and Senate, which could leave SNAP vulnerable to cuts later this fall during the budget debate or as part of the debt limit agreement.
- Members of Congress need to stand firm in opposing a stand-alone farm bill, as well as any cuts to SNAP.

Cutting SNAP will increase hunger and poverty, hurt our local economy, and shift the pain of budget cuts onto children. Without SNAP, families throughout the commonwealth — a majority of whom are working but earn low wages — would be unable to put food on the table.