

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28th, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Farm Bill Conferees,

We are writing to express our support for preventing harmful cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill. SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides essential nutrition benefits to working families, children, senior citizens, and disabled individuals in every state and town in our country. Every dollar in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.79 in economic activity, of which approximately 16 cents goes back to the farmers.

While we support efforts to improve the integrity of the SNAP program, we encourage conferees to reject all SNAP eligibility changes designed to erect new barriers to participation, preventing millions of seniors, children and families from accessing food assistance. The eligibility changes also will mean an additional 280,000 children would lose free school meals because children in SNAP households are automatically eligible for school meals. Changes would also increase administrative costs by requiring states to re-determine eligibility for SNAP, even if a household was deemed eligible for other state and/or federal assistance programs.

SNAP plays a critical role at a stressful time in the life of families. It allows struggling families to put groceries on their tables when they face financial troubles. Benefits average less than \$1.50 per individual, per meal, and within this limited budget they struggle to provide healthy, nutritious meals for themselves and their family. In fact half of SNAP participants entering the program are enrolled for 10 months or less.

Researchers estimate that half of all American children will receive SNAP at some point during childhood, and half of all adults will do so at some point between the ages of 20 and 65 years. Furthermore, SNAP recipients are diverse with regards to race-ethnicity, many have earned income, and the vast majority of SNAP households do not receive cash welfare benefits.

SNAP is a safety net program in the truest sense of the world; there is no other more fundamental human need than food. Please consider the needs of these struggling families, children, and senior citizens as you negotiate the final Farm Bill and the future of the SNAP program.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



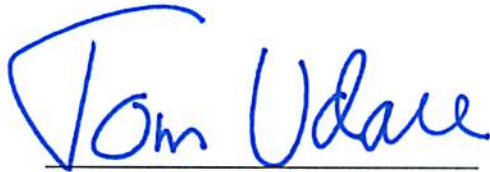
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



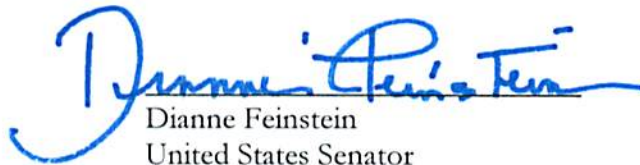
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



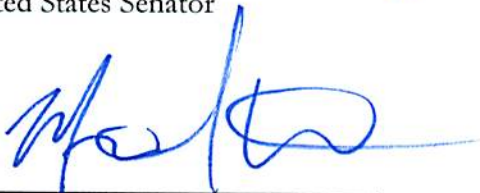
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



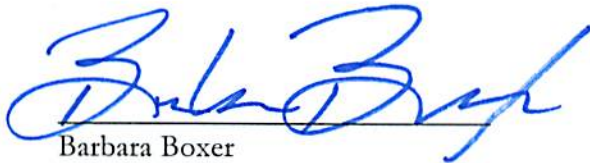
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Mark Begich
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



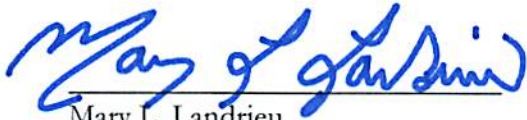
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator



Mark Udall
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Carl Levin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



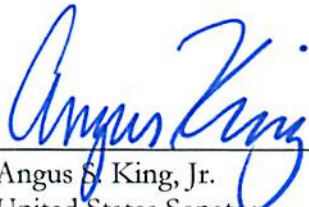
Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angus King". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "K".

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J".

Tim Johnson
United States Senator