

National Suicide Prevention Month. This is not an easy subject to talk about, especially since each person's circumstances differ. Yet, as the number 10 cause of death in the U.S., it is vital that people understand the issues concerning suicide and mental health so that anyone can help a person in crisis.

That is the focus of the advocacy message surrounding National Suicide Prevention Month this year, which is "Be the one to." Be the one to, because we can all follow the five action steps to make an impact on someone's life:

Be the one to ask.
Be the one to keep them safe.
Be the one to be there.
Be the one to help them connect.
Be the one to follow up.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website also provides tips to better identify potential warning signs before applying these five steps, as well as other resources.

For those in crisis, know that you are not alone and help is available. The lifeline is run 24/7 and can be reached at 1-800-273-8255.

SUICIDE TRENDS

(Ms. DEAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DEAN. Madam Speaker, I, too, rise on the issue of suicide.

Every day in America, 129 people die by suicide. Over a single year, that is more than 47,000 souls, each an irreplaceable loss.

Even more troubling, suicide is on the rise among teens, vets, and law enforcement. Between 2001 and 2017, the suicide rate increased by 31 percent. That year, 2017, saw 1.4 million suicide attempts in this country.

These trends have many causes, and we must get to the bottom of them, but we can start saving lives today.

Congress recently passed the STOIC Act, and the President signed it into law. This bipartisan bill will fund suicide prevention programs for law enforcement, where deaths by suicide now outstrip line-of-duty deaths.

Gun safety legislation will also make a difference. Firearms kill 40,000 people each year, including 60 percent to suicide.

Background checks and red flag laws save lives, but the Senate and the President have refused to act. We must call out their absence of action. Our country needs them to stand up.

Our own colleague, Representative SUSAN WILD, recently lost her partner to suicide and has bravely described its devastating effects and now lifts her strong voice so that others will not suffer the same.

Madam Speaker, it is time for us to act.

CONTINUING PRAYERS FOR DEPUTY BRAD SULLIVAN

(Mr. GUEST asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUEST. Madam Speaker, on September 5, 2019, the Madison County Sheriff's Department responded to a hostage situation near Canton, Mississippi.

Upon arrival, the suspect fled and led deputies on a high-speed chase throughout the northeastern part of the county before spike strips were deployed to stop the suspect's vehicle. Once immobilized, the suspect began to fire on deputies, striking two officers.

Deputy Brad Sullivan was shot multiple times as he arrived on the scene and was later transported to the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Deputy Sullivan remains in serious condition as our community unites with prayer, donations, and medical skill to save the life of this brave officer.

On behalf of Mississippi's Third Congressional District, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude and respect for Deputy Sullivan, the other deputies who responded, and the entire Madison County Sheriff's Department.

We ask all Mississippians to continue to pray for Brad's recovery and for God's hand of protection on all our law enforcement officers.

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FIRE DANGER MITIGATION

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to commend Vicki Christiansen, the Forest Service Chief, for proposing a new rule to add to our fire danger mitigation that we need to do in California and across the West.

Building upon my bill from a year and a half ago, the Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act, this allows the streamlining of the process to clear trees and brush, et cetera, around power lines, that make it a fire hazard.

We have certainly suffered enough fire loss in California. I had the Camp fire right in my own district, the Carr fire last year as well and, this year, already 54,000 acres burned in Plumas County.

As it is right now, our utilities have a hard time being able to get out and do the work because the permit process can be difficult. So they resort to late-ly, right in the middle of my district, what is known as the public safety power shutoff as a precaution, with the wind conditions and heat perhaps being able to cause additional wildfire.

We shouldn't put the utilities in that position of being cursed if they do or cursed if they don't for a possible fire. We need to get the work done around the power lines. So I hope this rule put through by the U.S. Forest Service will help us accomplish that.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I rise as a member of the Congressional Black Caucus to speak to this body about the issues that are important to Americans, everyday Americans.

The Congressional Black Caucus is the conscience of the Congress, and we feel that it is our responsibility in our Special Order Hours to address those issues and concerns that are of most importance to the people of America. We represent 70 million Americans in our caucus, 55 Members strong, and we are using this time to address this Congress on the issues of agriculture and the Black community.

Agriculture and the Black community, it is more than just SNAP for us.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DAVID SCOTT).

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I come before you as the chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit.

Madam Speaker, I rise at this moment to speak out against the United States Department of Agriculture's food and nutrition service proposed rule to change the eligibility requirements for SNAP; and let me tell you why, Madam Speaker.

It is because this proposed rule, number one, it would eliminate broad-based categorical eligibility for SNAP, and effectively end all SNAP benefits for more than 3 million seniors, veterans, working families with children, and individuals with disabilities.

Current eligibility simply allows low-income families and children to receive SNAP benefits if they have already qualified for other anti-poverty programs. That's it.

But, Madam Speaker, in fiscal year 2016 alone, over 10,000 Georgia households were helped to meet their basic needs as a direct result of current eligibility.

This proposed change is founded upon an unfortunately common, but incorrect assumption of "bad actors" wasting government funds. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not about that.

In reality, these programs have proven to both encourage work and increase savings in order to transition out of the program.

Madam Speaker, millions of Americans are just one lost job, just one health crisis, or another emergency, maybe the bread winner passed on. These things happen unexpectedly and any other emergency issues that may arise, it keeps them from becoming food insecure.

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of things that we can do without, but food we cannot ever do without. So it is up to us Members of Congress to look out for the most vulnerable among us.

If implemented, this rule would not only remove food from the tables of Americans, but also reduce their potential for economic success and financial security.

Ultimately, eliminating the ability of States to use categorical eligibility would mean jeopardizing the very futures of many hardworking Americans. So I urge my colleagues to join us within the Black Caucus—it is about all of us—and speak out against this proposed change in order to protect the health and well-being of all of our American people.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that enlightening information that he has shared with us. We know that the years of experience and seniority that the gentleman has gained on the Agriculture Committee have given him not only a passion, but a real understanding of the issues that are important, not only to Americans who utilize SNAP, but to those farmers and those in our agricultural community who are supportive of the things that we are trying to push forward and that this administration is, in fact, trying to impede.

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Speaker, that is correct. And that is why we are here tonight, with great compassion, with great fairness, asking our Members of Congress, on a unanimous basis, to join in this fight.

It is not just our fight. This is a fight that appeals to the basic nature and purpose of the American people. That is us. And I appreciate the gentlewoman inviting me to share in making this appeal.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I think of all the money that America spends on foreign aid, foreign food programs; and the fact that we, as Americans, are squabbling over feeding our own, of providing nutrition and assistance to those families, to veterans, to our elders, to our children who need these programs, it is astounding that we even have to have this conversation.

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Speaker, the gentlewoman is right. And I leave you with the words, the eloquent words, of Thomas Jefferson when he gave us the meaning of our great Nation: “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

One thing is for certain, we can’t be happy without food because we can’t live without food. There is no greater meaning for the implementation of Thomas Jefferson’s words: “Life, lib-

erty, and the pursuit of happiness.” That means food.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, as you can see, I am here alongside my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus in strong opposition to the administration’s proposal to severely restrict broad-based categorical eligibility, or cat-el.

This rule would kick millions of people struggling with hunger from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, most commonly known as SNAP, as well as approximately 250,000 children from preschool meals; 250,000 children who rely on this program to provide them with lunch, with breakfast, allowing them to be able to utilize their skills in school, allowing them to be able to learn on a daily basis.

Many of these children, we know, without this program are unable to eat, are unable to be able to stay awake in school because of the hunger that is within them, right here in this country. And so we are fighting to make sure that those children are not removed; that those millions of Americans are not removed from this program.

SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency; providing food assistance that averages just \$1.40 per person per meal, \$1.40 per meal.

SNAP is a modest benefit, with nearly half of the participants running out of benefits before the end of the month. If anything, policymakers should be debating how much to increase this supplemental benefit, given that there is no room for cuts.

What’s more, Trump’s tax law gave more in tax breaks to the top 1 percent than SNAP costs in its entirety. And if the Trump administration is looking for strategies to achieve savings in SNAP, while actually helping workers, it need look no further than raising the Federal minimum wage. Raising the Federal minimum wage to \$12, not even the \$15 proposed in the Raise the Wage Act, would save \$53 billion over the next 10 years, nearly four times as much as the proposed rule, by ensuring that workers earn more so that they are better able to afford food, instead of punishing labor market struggles with hunger.

The Trump administration’s proposed rule would recalculate how we measure poverty, a move that would more than likely result in reducing the eligibility criteria for individuals and removing people off certain Federal programs that are meant to assist poor and low-income families.

Recently, the Trump administration proposed a rule that would recalculate how we measure poverty, a move that would more than likely result in reducing the eligibility criteria for individuals and removing people off certain Federal programs that are meant to assist poor and low-income families.

The proposed rule would change how the Census measures poverty in a man-

ner that will artificially drive down the number of people counted as officially poor. Because eligibility for a range of basic supports is calculated based on the poverty threshold, each year, as costs go up, many working people with low pay would gradually be stripped of SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, parts of Medicare, Head Start, school lunch, legal services, even tax credits under the Affordable Care Act.

In my own district, due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services Division of Family Assistance executed Disaster SNAP, D-SNAP, and regular SNAP simultaneously. The Virgin Islands provided this Disaster SNAP to approximately 30,000 households, and SNAP to approximately 29,000 households.

There are approximately now 22,000 people on SNAP in the Virgin Islands, where we have a 33 percent child poverty rate.

As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, and a conferee on the 2018 farm bill, I am proud of the work we did on that bill. This proposal flies in the face of everything we worked on to build a bipartisan bill, a bipartisan consensus around the process of SNAP, and the funding, and the support we recognize that American families need.

House Democrats and our colleagues in the Senate expressly rejected changes to cat-el; the end result was the most overwhelmingly bipartisan farm bill in history. This is only an attempt by an ideological White House at an end-run around congressional intent. The White House is trying to take away the authority of this body, and we will not stand by and allow that to happen.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), who has worked extensively on this issue, as well as poverty issues and issues on how to increase healthcare benefits to American families. I yield to the gentleman to speak about those issues.

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Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the U.S. Virgin Islands for yielding and for her continued leadership on issues that impact Americans throughout the diaspora and also issues that the CBC finds necessary to continue to raise. We are known as the conscience of the Congress, and although we are the Congressional Black Caucus, we represent 78 million Americans of all stripes. That is something that I think is very important for people to understand.

I am not surprised that the gentlewoman once again has raised an issue for the caucus that impacts so many people in this Nation and, if President Trump has his way, negatively impacts so many people in this Nation.

I am very concerned about Trump’s latest attack on low-income Americans. His administration would like to make drastic changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,

or SNAP. The program, which used to be called food stamps, has helped millions of working parents, disabled Americans, and seniors afford a more nutritional diet.

Traditionally, SNAP benefits were assigned based on a standard income level. If you made less than 130 percent of the Federal poverty level, roughly \$2,300 per month, you were eligible. If you made more than that, you were not. However, there was an important clause in how the State governments assessed that income.

If you had a more prosperous year, say you made an extra \$100 or \$200 per month thanks to a side job, you could still be eligible for the benefits. States knew that such income might be temporary, and they did not want to punish hardworking Americans for seeking a better life.

The system worked because it encouraged nutritious eating for lower income citizens, a group that studies show have less nutritious diets across the board. And it allowed them to save a little money for the future.

In addition, it saved time because it allowed recipients to enroll automatically and provided a new market for American farm products. It was a win-win for everyone involved.

So, naturally, Trump wants to change that. He wants to impose a hard cap on the income levels for recipients, and he wants to eliminate eligibility for people with more than \$2,300 in a bank account.

If the rule is enacted, it could be disastrous for our country's lower income workers, disabled citizens, and the elderly. Millions of them could lose their benefits and return to unhealthy eating, because that is all they would be able to afford.

Study after study shows the costs to our Nation's healthcare from patients with poor diets. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that unhealthy eating costs about \$1 trillion, with a T, per year in extra healthcare and contributes to the death of almost 700,000 citizens annually, the size of a congressional district. These are costs we do not need, especially at a time when many economists say a recession is looming.

There are several other problems with this proposed rule. It promotes the belief that lower income Americans should stay lower income because it punishes people who want to save a little money. If you save too much, you could lose your benefits.

The greatest harm would be done to innocent schoolchildren. The free school meal programs across the country use SNAP eligibility to determine whether children can qualify for the meals. If their parents get eliminated from the system, at least 265,000 students could go hungry during the school day. If they lose those meals, academic studies show that their performance in school will drop significantly. You cannot think about math when you are thinking about an empty

stomach. They will have lower standardized test scores, and they are more likely to come to school late, if they come at all.

These children feel the shame of being in the Free and Reduced Meal Program already. This rule would reduce that shame by making sure they do not have any meals at all.

These are students who need support the most, so we need to support them the most. What we do not need are rules designed to keep them in poverty from an administration dedicated to enriching the wealthy and themselves.

We need to give States the freedom to assess their SNAP eligibility in a way that empowers them to empower their citizens. We need to promote healthy living with proper diet and nutrition choices. We need to protect our schoolchildren and do everything possible to make sure that they get every educational benefit possible.

That is why we need to fight this proposed rule change to the SNAP program.

Our farmers are struggling, thanks to Trump's trade wars, and our students are struggling from inequality already. We do not need to make both of those problems worse.

We are mortified but not surprised by the actions of a callous administration toward people of need. It is not surprising that the administration has looked into how it could once again penalize poor people, struggling children, and the elderly, who have paid their dues, played by the rules, and now need a little assistance, but they just don't matter.

This is not the country I was led to believe that I was growing up in. This is not what I learned in school. What we see here is a disassembling of a nation. Everything that we have stood for is falling apart around us because of this President and his administration.

We will continue to fight. I think our Nation is stronger than one man. We will come together as a great Nation once again and take care of the least of us. It is our obligation.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the great information, the statistics, the science that is there that explains to us what happens when SNAP is denied to young people, as well as his heartfelt words about where our Nation is going when we are unable to feed our own.

I have some remarks from another Member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, who is the chairperson of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations of the Agriculture Committee.

Madam Speaker, over 40 States and territories use broad-based categorical eligibility, or BBCE, to streamline the administration of SNAP and provide critical assistance to households receiving benefits and services through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant.

BBCE is proven to help millions of working poor families move toward fi-

nancial security by easing the benefits cliff as their earnings increase.

On July 24, 2019, USDA published a proposed rule to restrict the use of BBCE and eliminate SNAP benefits for an estimated 3.1 million Americans. This includes children, working families, military veterans, disabled individuals, and our seniors.

Most shameful is the proposal's impact on hungry school-age children. By USDA's own estimates, the new policy would take away direct access to free school meals for at least 500,000 schoolchildren. Nearly half a million children would be left to go hungry during the school day, shifting the burden to strapped school districts.

In her State of Ohio, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, over 61,000 SNAP households would lose their benefits. USDA reports that, in 2017, the prevalence of food insecurity among those in Ohio was higher than the national average. 13.7 percent of Ohioans were food insecure in 2017 compared to 12.3 percent nationally.

Even USDA admits the proposed changes to SNAP would make food insecurity worse and make it hard for millions of Americans to get by. Most notably, it would remove the current flexibility for States and territories to use BBCE to tailor SNAP to best meet the food needs of their own populations.

Republicans love to talk about States' rights when it suits them, but when it comes to the flexibility of States to meet the needs of food-insecure populations, then they want something very different.

As the economy continues to leave working families and our most vulnerable behind, programs like SNAP are needed more than ever.

Congress already debated these issues. We came together and rejected this policy in both the 2014 and 2018 farm bills with a record bipartisan vote.

This proposed rule is shameful, cruel, and contrary to the will of Congress. This unilateral action by the administration only complicates legitimate bipartisan efforts to make programs like SNAP more effective and efficient for millions of people who rely on it to put food on the table.

I thank Congresswoman FUDGE for her remarks, and she will include the remainder of her remarks in the RECORD.

I would note that on May 22, 2019, I sent my own Governor of the Virgin Islands a letter reminding him of the need for us to speak out on the proposed rule that would recalculate how we measure poverty, a move that would make it more than likely to result in reducing the eligibility criteria for individuals and removing people off certain Federal programs that are meant to assist poor and low-income families. I include that letter in the RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 22, 2019.
Governor ALBERT BRYAN Jr.,
Christiansted, VI.

GOVERNOR BRYAN: Recently, the Trump Administration proposed a rule that would recalculate how we measure poverty, a move that would more than likely result in reducing the eligibility criteria for individuals and removing people off certain federal programs that are meant to assist poor and low-income families.

The proposed rule would change how the Census measures poverty in a manner that will artificially drive down the number of people counted as officially poor. Because eligibility for a range of basic supports is calculated based on the poverty threshold, each year as costs go up, many working people with low pay would gradually be stripped of SNAP (formerly food stamps), WIC, Medicaid, parts of Medicare, Head Start, school lunch, legal services, and even tax credits under the Affordable Care Act.

Due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services Division of Family Assistance executed both Disaster SNAP—D-SNAP—and regular SNAP simultaneously. The Virgin Islands provided D-SNAP to approximately 30,000 households and SNAP to approximately 29,000 households territory-wide. As a result, members of the community were able to purchase desperately needed food. There are now approximately 22,000 people on SNAP in the Virgin Islands.

This is an important and vital program for Virgin Islanders. There is a 45-day window to comment on the proposal and the deadline is June 21, 2019. I am requesting that the Government of the Virgin Islands submit its comment on the effect this rule will have on the residents of the Territory.

Sincerely,

STACEY E. PLASKETT,
Member of Congress.

Ms. PLASKETT. I include in the RECORD letters from AARP, as well as the United States Conference of Mayors, that have written in during the comment period to speak out against and in opposition to the proposed rule changes by this administration.

AARP.

Washington, September 23, 2019.

Re FNS-2018-0037, Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

PROGRAM DESIGN BRANCH,
Program Development Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Alexandria, VA.

AARP, on behalf of its nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposed rule to revise categorical eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Ensuring that older Americans experiencing food-related hardship have access to nutrition assistance is a priority for AARP. SNAP provides critical food assistance for millions of people, including 8.7 million households with at least one adult age 50 or older.

AARP BELIEVES THE PROPOSED REVISION TO CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY IN SNAP WILL HARM LOW INCOME SENIORS AND RECOMMENDS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WITHDRAW ITS PROPOSAL.

We are deeply concerned that the Administration's proposal would harm older Americans' health and financial security. The proposed rule undermines the intent of SNAP to alleviate hunger and food insecurity among low-income households. Additionally, in an

attempt to restrict eligibility for SNAP, the proposed changes would make low-income households more financially vulnerable and more likely to rely on public benefit programs. According to USDA's regulatory impact analysis, the proposed rule may "negatively impact food security and reduce savings rates among those individuals who do not meet the income and resource eligibility requirements for SNAP or the substantial and ongoing requirements for expanded categorical eligibility." Similar efforts to limit broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) in the House-passed version of the 2018 Farm Bill were ultimately rejected on a bipartisan basis.

USDA estimates that the proposed regulation would eliminate SNAP eligibility for 3.1 million people, disproportionately impacting households with one or more elderly individual(s). Households with elderly members represent more than one-third of the 1.7 million households the Administration estimates would lose SNAP eligibility; meanwhile, those households make up only 24 percent of current program participants. The eligibility cut would affect 13 percent of households with seniors, 7 percent of households with children, and 9 percent of households overall. Since the cuts would disproportionately harm elderly individuals, USDA determined that there is a potential for "civil rights impacts," which is alarming to AARP.

SNAP IS CRITICAL TO THE FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH OF MILLIONS OF OLDER AMERICANS.

SNAP is the primary source of nutrition assistance for many people who are struggling to put food on the table. While the program provides a modest benefit (\$125 a month on average for households with members age 60 or older), it helps recipients meet their basic food needs. SNAP is an especially important program for older Americans because many face challenges to employment, live on fixed incomes, live alone, and have limited financial resources to spend on necessities like food, housing, and essential medicine.

Unfortunately, food insecurity among older Americans is already all too common. An estimated 5.5 million Americans age 60 and older were food insecure in 2017. Households with grandchildren are nearly three times as likely to be food insecure. The proposed rule would lead to even greater food insecurity among older Americans.

Older adults who are food insecure are at increased risk for many negative health outcomes. They are over twice as likely to report being in fair or poor health relative to older adults who are food-secure. Compared to food-secure older adults, they are also 53 percent more likely to report a heart attack, 52 percent more likely to develop asthma, 40 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure, 22 percent more likely to face limitations of Activities of Daily Living, and 60 percent more likely to experience depression.

Food insecurity among older adults also results in significant costs to the American public, particularly through increased expenditures on health care. Experts widely agree that nutrition is one of the most important factors influencing our health. SNAP participation has been linked to reduced hospital and nursing home admissions among older adults. Research examining older adults who were dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid in Maryland found that SNAP participants were 23 percent less likely to enter a nursing home and those dually enrolled were 4 percent less likely to be hospitalized in the year after receiving SNAP in comparison to nonparticipants. Enrolling the millions of seniors eligible but

not enrolled in SNAP could result in billions of dollars in health care savings.

BBCE ALLOWS LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS TO SAVE FOR EMERGENCIES AND BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT.

The law governing SNAP, determined by Congress, sets the income limit and asset limit for the program, and offers important options provided to state administrators. For more than 20 years, states have had the flexibility to lift the asset tests under SNAP allowing families to purchase groceries without having to spend down their limited savings. This allows them to maintain a cushion that can help them weather future financial emergencies caused by unexpected health emergencies, natural disasters, or an unforeseen job loss. A basic level of savings can prevent severe hardship as a result of a financial shock and can ultimately reduce the likelihood that a household will need public benefits like SNAP.

Currently, 23 states and jurisdictions using BBCE have no asset limit for SNAP. Under the proposed rule, states would lose this flexibility, and SNAP applicants would be held to the restrictive federal asset limits. Asset tests disqualify families and individuals from food assistance if they have managed to save as little as \$2,250—or \$3,500 for households with elderly or disabled members—who may struggle with replenishing any assets they spend down. This would discourage low-income households from accumulating small but meaningful assets, jeopardizing their financial security and making it more likely that they will need to turn to SNAP or other public assistance programs for support. A recent study found that BBCE increases the likelihood that a SNAP recipient has at least \$500 in a bank account by 8 percent. By allowing SNAP recipients to build a reasonable level of preventive savings under BBCE, households are more likely to set aside some money and become more self-sufficient.

THE PROPOSED RULE WOULD INCREASE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR STATES AND HOUSEHOLDS.

The rule would significantly limit states' flexibility and make eligibility for SNAP benefits more restrictive for people in 39 states, Washington D.C., Guam and the Virgin Islands. According to USDA, BBCE reduces administrative burdens for State agencies and households and particularly benefits working households. Under the proposed rule, 17.2 million households that remain eligible for SNAP, as well as new SNAP applicants, would face additional burdens associated with the application process. Research has demonstrated that policies that add burdens to SNAP participation contribute to a decline in program participation. Instead of increasing burdens on SNAP applicants, we call for changes that would make enrollment in SNAP easier and as seamless as possible. Application forms, procedures, and program notices should be shortened, simplified, and integrated with other government benefit programs. BBCE currently helps reduce the complexity of the SNAP application process and helps to improve state administration while lowering administrative costs.

Despite the benefits of SNAP, older adult participation rates in SNAP are the lowest of any age group. In FY 2017, 84 percent of all eligible individuals were enrolled in SNAP. However, only 48 percent of eligible elderly individuals were enrolled in the program, including just 29 percent of elderly individuals living with other people. A number of factors already keep eligible older Americans from receiving benefits, including the complicated and time-consuming application and enrollment processes. Processes that make enrollment and reporting easier and help overcome

the barriers that keep older Americans from accessing the food assistance they need are important for reducing food insecurity among older adults.

CONCLUSION

We are committed to reducing hunger and food insecurity among older Americans and therefore urge the Administration to withdraw its proposal. SNAP provides important nutritional support, promotes healthy aging, and is associated with reduced health care costs. The BBCE policy in particular also helps people save and improve their financial wellbeing. Instead of reducing eligibility for the program while increasing administrative burdens, we should be working to further strengthen SNAP and improve participation in the program, particularly among eligible older adults who underutilize the program more than any other age group. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

DAVID CERTNER,
*Legislative Counsel
and Legislative Policy Director, Government Affairs.*

THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE
OF MAYORS,
Washington, DC, September 23, 2019.

Ms. JESSICA SHAHIN,
Associate Administrator, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Program Design Branch, Program Development Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Alexandria, VA.

DEAR ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR SHAHIN: On behalf of the US Conference of Mayors (USCM), we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed revision of “broad based categorical eligibility” in USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) published in the Federal Register on July 23, 2019. As noted in the proposal’s regulatory analysis, this far reaching executive action will escalate food insecurity and hunger for an estimated 3.1 million individuals—including children, seniors, and people with disabilities in our states, regions and cities nationwide. Furthermore, this proposal will put children’s health and development at risk by removing their access to healthy school meals; and harm our economy by reducing the amount of SNAP dollars available to spur regional and local economic activity.

As Mayors, we serve as the CEOs of the nation’s cities; and remain most concerned about any proposal that will reduce improvements to the health of our residents, weaken nutrition programs, deteriorate advances to healthy food access, and spur declines in local and regional economies. USCM has supported and adopted policies over many years to eliminate hunger, combat food insecurity and improve health disparities to build a stronger society for all residents in our communities. Equally, we have vigorously opposed the proposed revision of broad based categorical eligibility of USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and rejected this proposal most recently throughout deliberation of the Farm Bill in 2018.

SNAP remains one of our nations’ key resources in the fight against hunger and is particularly important to vulnerable populations in our cities. For instance, 80 percent of SNAP households include a child, an elderly person, or a person with disabilities; and 85 percent of all SNAP benefits go to such households. Furthermore, SNAP is not only a critical resource in the fight against hunger and food insecurity, but also lifts people out of poverty. Per the 2017 Supple-

mental Poverty Measure Report, SNAP lifted 3.4 million people—including 1.5 million children out of poverty in 2017. So, we stand united and reject any proposal to restrict eligibility to vulnerable adults, children, seniors, and people with disabilities in our cities.

Research has found that receipt of SNAP in early childhood improved high school graduation rates, adult earnings, and adult health. Mayors recognize that solving child hunger and poverty is critically important to also creating a future where all children thrive. Regular access to healthy and affordable meals is one of the strongest predictors of improved school performance, better health, and sound childhood development.

Lastly, the proposed rule will harm local and regional economies, as it is well documented that the economic gains from public benefits are even greater than the volume of direct assistance due to a “multiplier” effect. USDA has estimated that during times of economic downturn, every additional \$5 dollars in SNAP benefits generates up to \$9 dollars of economic activity, and every \$1 billion increase in SNAP benefits results in 8,900 full-time equivalent jobs.

Executive action should not be used to hurt individuals, families and communities; and we urge you to abandon this proposal. Our nation cannot remain globally competitive if our children do not have enough to eat; if our citizens do not have access to affordable health care; if housing and other basic needs are priced out of reach; and if adults who are willing and able to work cannot find jobs that will help them support their families.

Sincerely,

Levar Stoney, Mayor of Richmond, VA, Chair, Children, Health, and Human Services Standing Committee; Greg Fischer, Mayor of Louisville, KY, Vice President; Hardie Davis Jr., Mayor of Augusta, GA; Jesse Arreguin, Mayor of Berkeley, CA; Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston, MA; Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC, Co-Chair, Food Policy Task Force; Nan Whaley, Mayor of Dayton, OH, Second Vice President; Steve Adler, Mayor of Austin, TX; John A. Mirisch, Mayor of Beverly Hills, CA; Byron W. Brown, Mayor of Buffalo, NY.

Bernard “Jack” Young, Mayor of Baltimore, MD, Co-Chair, Food Policy Task Force; Steve Benjamin, Mayor of Columbia, SC, Past President; Denny Doyle, Mayor of Beaverton, OR; Michael J. Venezia, Mayor of Bloomfield, NJ; Dave Palmer, Mayor of Butte, MT; Pam Hemminger, Mayor of Chapel Hill, NC; Patrick L. Wojahn, Mayor of College Park, MD; Steve Schewel, Mayor of Durham, NC; Lily Mei, Mayor of Fremont, CA; Bobby J. Hopewell, Mayor of Kalamazoo, MI.

David J. Berger, Mayor of Lima, OH; Robert A.B. Reichert, Mayor of Macon, GA; Steve Gawron, Mayor of Muskegon, MI; Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York, NY; Francis ‘Mac’ Womack III, Mayor of North Brunswick NJ; Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor of Plainfield, NJ; Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor of Providence, RI; Lovely A. Warren, Mayor of Rochester, NY; Pauline Russo Cutter, Mayor of San Leandro, CA; John J. Tecklenburg, Mayor of Charleston, SC.

Eric Johnson, Mayor of Dallas, TX; James B. Hovland, Mayor of Edina, MN; Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston, TX; Ontario ‘Don’ Hardy, Mayor of Kinston, NC; John P. Marchand, Mayor of Livermore, CA; Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor of Madison, WI; Jill Techel, Mayor of Napa, CA; McKinley L. Price DDS, Mayor of Newport News, VA; Jim Kenney, Mayor of Philadelphia, PA; Rex Hardin, Mayor of Pompano Beach, FL.

Hillary Shieve, Mayor of Reno, NV; Jackie Biskupski, Mayor of Salt Lake City, UT; Alan Webber, Mayor of Santa Fe, NM; Mary

Casillas Salas, Mayor of Chula Vista, CA; Michael B. Hancock, Mayor of Denver, CO; Lionel Jordan, Mayor of Fayetteville, AK; Steve Williams, Mayor of Huntington, WV; Kenneth D. Miyagishima, Mayor of Las Cruces, NM; Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles, CA; Jacob Frey, Mayor of Minneapolis, MN.

David Briley, Mayor of Nashville, TN; Chris Koos, Mayor of Normal, IL; Brian C. Wahler, Mayor of Piscataway, NJ; Ted Wheeler, Mayor of Portland, OR; Thomas K. Butt, Mayor of Richmond, CA; Ron Nirenberg, Mayor of San Antonio; Gleam Davis, Mayor of Santa Monica, CA; Gary R. McCarthy, Mayor of Schenectady, NY; Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend, IN; Michael D. Tubbs, Mayor of Stockton, CA.

Michelle De La Isla, Mayor of Topeka, KS; Thomas M. Roach, Mayor of White Plains, NY; David J. Narkewicz, Mayor of Northampton, MA; Alex B. Morse III, Mayor of Holyoke, MA; William C. Reichert, Mayor of West Springfield, MA; Michael M. Vargas, Mayor of Perris, CA; Nicole LaChapelle, Mayor of Easthampton, MA; Margarita L. Rios, Mayor of Norwalk, CA; Tim Sandoval, Mayor of Pomona, CA; Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor of Seattle, WA.

William ‘Bill’ Edwards, Mayor of South Fulton, GA; Victoria Woodards, Mayor of Tacoma, WA; Jonathan Rothschild, Mayor of Tucson, AZ; Cassie Franklin, Mayor of Everett, WA; William Peduto, Mayor of Pittsburgh, PA; Emmett V. Jordan, Mayor of Greenbelt, MD; Andy Schor, Mayor of Lansing, MI; Ian Bain, Mayor of Redwood City, CA; Mayor of Alejandra Sotelo-Solis, Mayor of National City, CA; Teresa Barrett, Mayor of Petaluma, CA.

Peter Weiss, Mayor of Oceanside, CA; Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor of Somerset, MD; Lyda Krewson, Mayor of St. Louis, MO; Mark W. Mitchell, Mayor of Tempe, AZ; Carol Dutra-Vernaci, Mayor of Union City, CA; Hazelle Rogers, Mayor of Lauderdale Lakes, FL; Kate Gallego, Mayor of Phoenix, AZ; Thomas W. Bernard, Mayor of North Adams, MA; Adele Andrade-Stadler, Mayor of Alhambra, CA; Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor of Newton, MA.

Martine Watkins, Mayor of Santa Cruz, CA; Petrella Robinson, Mayor of North Brentwood, MD; Robert Garcia, Mayor of Long Beach, CA.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, may I ask how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands has 32 minutes remaining.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, President Trump’s latest attempt to slash SNAP would be harmful to Americans across the country, but certain communities face particular risks. Six of the groups that Trump’s proposed rules would hit hardest include rural communities, Black and Latinx America, people with disabilities, people with criminal records who are trying to move on, those in the LGBTQ community, and women.

Given that 76 percent of rural adults report that good jobs are scarce in their areas, rural communities will be among the hardest hit by Trump’s proposed rule, as it would tie States’ hands and remove the flexibility they need to help residents of high-unemployment areas put food on the table.

Indeed, while urban areas experienced a net gain of 3.6 million jobs from 2007 to 2015, rural areas lost 400,000 jobs during that time, meaning

that many rural areas have struggled to recover from the Great Recession.

□ 2000

Additionally, Black and Hispanic households are especially likely to be food insecure and thus disproportionately rely on SNAP to help them meet basic needs, accounting for about 30 percent, and nearly 20 percent of SNAP benefits in 2016, respectively.

This is due in large part to the systematic barriers that African Americans and Latinx Americans face to building wealth, purchasing homes, accessing education, and escaping poverty.

Poverty rates in these communities are more than double those of White Americans, and the Black unemployment rate is still more than twice that of White workers, despite what is spoken of in the White House. In 2016, Black Americans' median wealth was only \$13,460, compared with \$142,000 for White Americans.

People with disabilities:

The proposed rule purports to apply only to "able-bodied adults without dependents." What does that mean? Many of the more than 11 million people with disabilities who receive SNAP assistance could lose that assistance under the rule, as people who face limited work capacity due to disability or poor health are regularly misclassified as able-bodied for the purposes of SNAP.

In fact, based on analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the author estimates that 12 percent of SNAP recipients ages 18 to 59 have at least one physical, functional, or work limitation but are not counted as disabled under SNAP.

People with criminal records:

The proposed rule particularly harms people who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Nearly nine in ten employers use criminal background checks in hiring. This means that even an old, minor criminal record can serve as a life sentence to poverty and joblessness. As a result, the unemployment rate among formerly incarcerated individuals is approximately 27 percent. What is more, one study shows that 60 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals remain unemployed 1 year following their release.

By helping people put food on the table while they get back on their feet, SNAP is a powerful tool for supporting reentry and preventing recidivism. In fact, one study shows that when formerly incarcerated people are subjected to harsher SNAP requirements, compounded by the substantial barriers they already face, recidivism rates increase.

Taking SNAP away from workers as they struggle to rebuild their lives and reenter the labor market would thus directly undercut the bipartisan gains that the President and Congress say they support in the FIRST STEP Act.

The LGBTQ people:

Trump's proposed rule would also be particularly burdensome for the

LGBTQ community. According to a 2017 nationally representative CAP survey, LGBTQ people are more than twice as likely as non-LGBTQ people to receive SNAP benefits, with 26 percent of LGBTQ women and 18 percent of men reporting that they or their families received SNAP.

The disproportionate receipt of benefits is just one reason that this rule would be particularly burdensome for the LGBTQ community. The rule would especially harm workers because they are especially likely to face labor market barriers that make it more difficult for them to find employment.

Women:

Women make up two-thirds of the low-wage workforce, making them especially likely to face the unstable schedules that would be punished by the Trump proposal's punitive time limits.

In addition to the challenges of low-wage work, women are disproportionately likely to be caregivers, including caring for people who may not be considered dependents under Trump's proposed SNAP rule. For example, women are literally 1.4 times more likely than men to provide unpaid care and help to people who live outside of their home.

While women struggle to manage the challenges of unstable low-wage work and caregiving, they are also more likely to face workplace discrimination than men. For example, nearly 36 percent of women who filed sexual harassment charges from 2012 to 2016 claimed that they faced retaliation as a result, such as their employers forcing them out of their jobs or reducing their hours. Therefore, women who face discrimination may be more likely to be subject to the proposed rule.

African Americans on average have the lowest household incomes among all racial/ethnic groups except Native Americans. The poverty rate for African Americans is almost two times greater than the general U.S. population. These are, in fact, issues that we all face and should be aware of.

SNAP is a powerful anti-poverty program for all people. In a typical month in 2017, SNAP helped about 13 million African Americans put sufficient food on the table. Its benefits lifted about 2.1 million African Americans, including 1 million children, above the poverty line in 2015. SNAP also kept 1.2 million African Americans out of deep poverty—above half of the poverty line—that year.

Approximately \$20 billion in SNAP benefits, about 30 percent of the total, went to African American households in fiscal year 2016.

On average, African American households that participate in SNAP receive \$260 in SNAP each month, just \$260.

A typical participating African American family of three has an average monthly income of \$940, or 56 percent of the poverty line. When their \$390 SNAP benefit, the average for a family of three, is added to their cash income, total monthly income rises by 29 percent, to \$1,330.

But this is just an example of what this administration is doing. One, going against what this Congress has already proposed and agreed to, bipartisan support, getting something across the line, bringing it to the President's desk, he signs it, and then through the administration, agencies, or executive order, attempting to slash at the authority of this body, of this first branch of government, who in fact, makes laws.

I know that firsthand, as that is exactly what is happening right now in the Virgin Islands with the disaster relief funding that this body came up with.

We recall that this body decided that it was, in fact, going to give the territories money for disaster relief, and now we are facing FEMA guidance delays on new resiliency and rebuilding provisions.

Additionally, FEMA denying local administration of FEMA permanent housing reconstruction programs; FEMA not willing to advance funding for major recovery projects, taking too long to improve major worksheets; HUD delaying releasing CDBG recovery funding and segregating it from the rest of the country; action plan for unmet needs was approved on March 1, but still no grant agreement 6 months later, 2 years after the hurricanes; FEMA administrations denying cost share waivers on FEMA aid, which was given to the Katrina area; refusal to exercise clear statutory authority to do this for the Virgin Islands.

This is what this administration appears to be doing: allowing Congress to come up with bipartisan legislation, whether it be SNAP, assistance to farmers, food programs, disaster relief, having bipartisan support in both chambers, getting it across the line, signing it and then undercutting it, undermining this body, undermining the democratic process that is in place. We must do something about it.

In January of 1865, when Union General William T. Sherman issued an order to allocate 40 acres to each freedman, the Black ministers who lobbied for the policy envisioned vibrant, self-governed Black agrarian communities dotting the southern countryside. Unfortunately, President Andrew Johnson's revocation of this order later that year and the institution of the Jim Crow regime after reconstruction left rural Black Americans to build their farming communities from scratch.

It wouldn't be the first time the U.S. Government worked to undermine Black farmers, and it certainly wasn't the last. We are seeing that even today.

Yet, even in the face of broken promises, not to mention the violence and discrimination aimed at Black farmers and Black Americans by White landowners and lenders, those farms secured a foothold in American agriculture.

At the height of Black farming in 1920, Black farmers operated 925,710 farms, about one-seventh of all farm

operations in the United States. Today, going from one-seventh, as of 2012, Black farmers make up less than 2 percent of all farmers.

In the Virgin Islands, we recognize this. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a long and well-documented history of discrimination against Black farmers. The unequal administration of government farm support programs, crucial to protecting farmers from an inherently risky enterprise, has had a profound impact on rural communities of color.

We have got to stay on this administration to make sure that all Americans have a fair shot, not only at food and food security through SNAP, but also to ensure that those farmers, American farmers, particularly minority farmers, have a fair shot at being part of that food production.

We know that in the Virgin Islands, our farmers farm very small acreages of land, but we are hoping and looking for the support of the USDA to live up to their example and the ideal that they are there to support farmers, not to undermine them; they are there to support not just the commodities, but to those specialty crop workers, those smaller farmers who are providing food and sustenance to Americans here in this country.

We know that fresh food is the best food for our children as part of the school lunch program, and we must expand support for the farm-to-the-schoolroom programs, those programs that allow local farmers to be the ones to provide the food for those school programs that are in place, and not allow the administration to undercut any part of the process.

We know that the Congressional Black Caucus will be vigilant at ensuring that this administration does not cross the line, and we will be vigilant at bringing to the American people the message that this Congress will not sit back and allow any administration, Democrat, Republican, anybody, to shirk their responsibility to the American people.

As the conscience of the Congress, that is our charge, and we will continue to do that work.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, Congresswoman

PLASKETT for anchoring this Special Order on support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

I want to express my significant concerns with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed rule to change the determination qualifications for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Currently, nearly 36 million people receive monthly SNAP benefits.

To be eligible for assistance, gross monthly income must be at or below 130 percent of the poverty line.

44.4 percent of residents in Houston live at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

In the Houston metropolitan area households with children, 19.3 percent struggled against food hardships in 2014–2015.

In February of 2018, SNAP served 304,542 households in Houston, bringing in \$82,374,563 of 100 percent federally funded benefits, generating approximately \$147.5 million in economic activity.

In Harris County alone, 599,928 people are eligible for SNAP benefits.

In August of 2019 Harris County received a total of \$70.9 million in totally SNAP payments.

As a result of the proposal 3 million people may lose their eligibility for food assistance.

States currently have the flexibility to not cut off benefits as soon as a family's gross income exceeds a certain level, but to more slowly phase out the food aid.

This is to ensure that those who are at or slightly above the poverty line do not risk falling below that line.

Additionally, these benefits reduce food insecurity and help alleviate poverty.

The proposed changes would limit this and cause many families to be abruptly cut off.

The new proposal jeopardizes access to free school meals for 500,000 low-income students.

Not only does this significantly affect families but also retired populations that rely on a fixed income.

This would adversely affect food banks around the nation as people look for food elsewhere.

Forcing families to choose between placing food on the table and covering other important expenses is unacceptable.

This proposal shows the Republicans' special interest agenda that gives billion-dollar handouts to big corporations and the wealthy few, and then steals from children, veterans, seniors and working families to make up the difference.

It is both cruel and counterproductive, ignoring the positives that SNAP puts into the

economy by creating \$1.79 for every dollar in benefits.

This proposed rule change does not help and support low-income individuals and families meet their basic human needs.

The current Administration is rejecting the overwhelmingly bipartisan passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, which made smart improvements that strengthened the safety net for food-insecure families.

This Administration must commit to implementing the bipartisan agreement to make anti-hunger initiatives more effective.

House Democrats will always stand firm for the health, well-being and dignity of America's working families, and will continue to advance our For The People agenda to deliver lower health care costs, bigger paychecks and cleaner government that fights for the public interests, not the special interests.

Thus, I urge the administration to reconsider this proposal and look at the adverse effects that it will have on our society.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1340. An act to authorize activities to combat the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Cheryl L. Johnson, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1058. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to enhance activities of the National Institutes of Health with respect to research on autism spectrum disorder and enhance programs relating to autism, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, September 25, 2019, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

BUDGETARY EFFECTS OF PAYGO LEGISLATION

Pursuant to the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO), Mr. YARMUTH hereby submits, prior to the vote on passage, for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, that H.R. 2229, the First Responders Passport Act of 2019, as amended, would have no significant effect on the deficit, and therefore, the budgetary effects of such bill are estimated as zero.

Pursuant to the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO), Mr. YARMUTH hereby submits, prior to the vote on passage, the attached estimate of the costs of H.R. 3190, the BURMA Act of 2019, as amended, for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.