

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

April 16, 2018

Senator Jon Tester
311 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Greg Gianforte
1419 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Tester, Senator Daines, and Congressman Gianforte:

I am writing to share the State of Montana's priorities for the Nutrition Title of the 2018 Farm Bill. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and additional nutrition programs are an integral part of the Farm Bill and essential to keeping Montana communities and economy healthy and strong. In the recent Western Governors Association's Policy Resolution, we stated that nutrition assistance programs meet the needs of children and the most vulnerable, while creating economic opportunity across the agriculture supply-chain. It is Montana's priority that no cuts or structural changes be made to SNAP and other nutrition programs, or changes that would require unrealistic cost-shifts to the Montana taxpayer.

As you know, thirteen percent of households in Montana face food insecurity, including nearly 1 in 5 children. The prevalence and consequences of hunger in our state would be far worse if not for our nation's successful and cost-effective anti-hunger programs. SNAP is our most important anti-hunger program, providing essential food assistance for children, seniors, low-income workers, veterans and military families, people with disabilities, and people temporarily unemployed. Over seventy percent of SNAP recipients in Montana are in families with children and nearly thirty percent are in families with seniors or people with disabilities.

SNAP helps approximately 120,000 Montanans put food on the table each month and keeps approximately 27,000 Montanans out of poverty each year, including 11,000 children. SNAP also helps working Montanans provide for their families while navigating periods of unemployment or underemployment.

SNAP provides long-term benefits for children and families. Research has shown that young children who receive SNAP do better in school and are more likely to graduate from high school as compared to children from similar low-income families who do not receive food assistance. Children are less likely to suffer from health problems like obesity and heart disease later in life, and low-income adults receiving SNAP spend twenty-five percent less in medical care each year compared to those who do not receive SNAP benefits.

Senator Daines, Senator Tester,
and Congressman Gianforte
April 16, 2018
Page 2

SNAP makes all of Montana stronger. Reduced food insecurity not only improves health care outcomes and educational opportunities, it also increases economic productivity in Montana by supporting Montana's local businesses and family farms. SNAP brings \$170 million into Montana's economy every year, which is then spent in our grocery stores, general stores, and farmer's markets throughout the state. Each dollar in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity. A reduction in SNAP would result in a loss of businesses and jobs—hurting Montana's economy, small businesses, and our rural communities.

I urge you to protect the SNAP program and the additional nutrition programs from cuts or significant structural changes that would undermine their effectiveness. As you know, states play a key role implementing and overseeing these important programs. One of the reasons the SNAP Program has been so successful is that it provides states like Montana the flexibility to tailor SNAP to best support our local economies and changes in unemployment levels. As you consider Farm Bill reauthorization this year, I urge you to maintain current state flexibilities and not impose any new requirements on states that would weaken and hinder our ability to respond to the needs of Montanans.

On behalf of all Montanans, I respectfully ask you to support Montana's priorities and oppose any cuts, structural changes, or cost-shifts within the Nutrition Title of the 2018 Farm Bill. We Montanans care about the health of our citizens and communities. We care about providing for our families and having a strong economy. Most of all, we care about looking out for our neighbors who need a helping hand. I ask you to protect these Montana values when you consider the Nutrition Title of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor