

July 30, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for all of your efforts to enhance nutrition and food security. We share your commitment to addressing food insecurity and prioritizing the health of the nation. Therefore, we urge you to avoid advancing policies that would lead to restricting food choices available in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The *National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health* delineated the many different approaches that will help end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030. It is commendable that the *National Strategy* did not include punitive restrictions limiting SNAP participants' ability to select their food choices for themselves and their families. Instead, the *National Strategy* focused on empowering all consumers, not just consumers with low-income, to make and have access to healthy choices, leveraging information and incentives.

SNAP restrictions will reduce individual dignity, not improve health outcomes, and increase administrative burden for both state agencies and retailers. This will cause unnecessary disruption for participants, retailers and their employees who serve as key private sector partners in implementing these programs, and food manufacturers who are constantly innovating to address the very same challenges identified in the *National Strategy*.

SNAP customers deserve to have dignity in their shopping experience for the foods that best suit them and their culturally relevant needs. USDA has made great strides to reduce the stigma associated with the program. Outright restrictions or pilots for restrictions will serve to increase stigma associated with the program and disproportionately impact communities of color that have higher SNAP participation rates. Administrative hurdles such as requiring USDA to maintain and share in real-time a list of foods that are eligible for purchase through SNAP, including interoperability between states or localities conducting pilot projects and other locations, may hinder our neighbors' ability to fully leverage this hunger program when they need additional support to put food on their tables.

The American public agrees that individuals should be trusted to decide what foods are best to nourish themselves and their families. People with lived experience of food insecurity want dignified access to food, not restrictions on food choices. In a 2022 report, 78% of people facing food insecurity surveyed wanted SNAP to have easier access to food, not restrictions on food choices. The 2023 report reaffirmed this principle, as 87% of people surveyed agreed that if Congress passes policies to reduce hunger and food

insecurity, it is important that these policies support people's dignity and choices in what they feed their families. SNAP participants, like all people, should be trusted to make the food selections that are best for themselves and their families.

The opinion of SNAP participants was echoed in a recent poll of likely voters, where 73% agreed that the government should not take away the autonomy of people using SNAP by putting even more limitations on their food choices. There is also little support for passing new laws that make SNAP harder to access, as 73% of likely voters do not want new restrictions.

We urge you to preserve the current level of choice that SNAP participants have and reject restrictions or pilots that will impact not just retailers, their employees, food manufacturers and others, but most importantly SNAP participants who deserve to have the same dignity of all consumers to choose the foods that are best suited for them and their culturally relevant needs. We encourage you to focus on proven policy strategies to enhance nutrition and food security, such as the incentives provided through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, Healthy Fluid Milk Incentives, SNAP-Ed, and improving food access and affordability.

Sincerely,

American Bakers Association  
Alliance to End Hunger  
American Beverage Association  
Can Manufacturers Institute  
Congressional Hunger Center  
Equitable Spaces  
Feeding America  
FoodCorps  
FoodFinder, Inc.  
Food Research & Action Center  
FMI – The Food Industry Association  
GRACE  
Grubhub  
Islamic Relief USA  
International Dairy Foods Association  
Independent Bakers Association  
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Confectioners Association  
National Grocers Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Retail Federation

North American Millers' Association  
Save the Children  
Share Our Strength  
SNAC International  
United Food and Commercial Workers