

The Des Moines Area Religious Council supports a bipartisan Farm Bill and opposes proposed changes to SNAP which are included in the House Republican Farm Bill (H R 2), specifically those having to do with expanding work requirements and eliminating categorical eligibility. While we do not oppose work requirements in theory, **we believe the proposed changes would do more harm than good.**

WORK REQUIREMENTS

What the bill does: The bill would expand current ABAWD (able-bodied adults without dependents) work requirements for SNAP to everyone ages 18-59, with exceptions to people with a disability or caretaker of a child age six or under. Practically, this change would now require people ages 50-59 and caretakers of children over the age of six to work or participate in a job training program for at least 20 hours per week to qualify for SNAP.

Why this is a concern: Requiring monthly employment verification, with punitive measures for non-compliance, for all SNAP participants ages 18-59, will be overwhelming and tedious, both for states to administer and for program participants to navigate. This burdensome process will in fact be a barrier to individuals who *are* employed and trying to access SNAP benefits they qualify for.

We are also concerned about the amount of funding for and timeline of expanding state workforce training programs. The 2014 Farm Bill established pilot projects in 10 states to test the effectiveness of different education and training programs. We should wait for results to come back before making major changes.

Looking at our Food Pantry Network data from January 1, 2018 - April 30, 2018, we can see:

- we served 30,952 unique individuals
- 5,401 individuals (17%) receive SNAP and would be subject to proposed work requirements (*all individuals ages 18-59, excluding those with a disability or caretaker to a child six or under*)
- of these SNAP recipients, only 281 individuals (5%) were age 50-59 and not currently working, and only 63 individuals (1%) were age 18-59, the caretaker of a child over the age of six, and not currently working—a total of 344 individuals.

5,401 current SNAP recipients in our Network would be subject to stricter work requirements all in an effort to move 344 unemployed individuals to work or a training program.

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

What the bill does: The bill would eliminate broad based categorical eligibility, disallowing states from expanding eligibility for SNAP beyond the 130% FPL threshold. Up to 2 million individuals could lose their SNAP benefits as a result.

Why this is a concern: We do not believe that 130% FPL is an adequate income to no longer need to rely on SNAP, and categorical eligibility has allowed states like Iowa to mitigate some aspects of the “cliff effect” by increasing the threshold to 160% FPL.

Looking at our Food Pantry Network data from January 1, 2018 - April 30, 2018, we can see:

- 857 individuals had household income between 130-160% FPL and benefited from SNAP
- 32% of these individuals were children

These 850 people are just a small sample of the millions who would be affected by this change.