



Senate of Pennsylvania

July 29, 2019

To the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation, consisting of:

Senator Robert Casey Jr.
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick Toomey
248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick
1722 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Brendan Boyle
1133 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Dwight Evans
1105 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Madeleine Dean
129 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Mary Gay Scanlon
1535 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Chrissy Houlahan
1218 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Susan Wild
1607 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Matt Cartwright
1034 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Daniel Meuser
326 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Scott Perry
1207 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Lloyd Smucker
127 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Fred Keller
1717 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative John Joyce
1337 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Guy Reschenthaler
531 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Glenn Thompson
400 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Mike Kelly
1707 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Conor Lamb
1224 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Michael F. Doyle
306 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation:

The Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Caucus stands united in opposition to the proposed rule change in eligibility for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

As you may be aware, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently opened the public comment period for proposed changes to Section 5(a) of the SNAP program. These provisions allow individuals who are eligible for or receiving benefits from other assistance programs to qualify for SNAP without having to go through a separate financial eligibility review. Pennsylvania is one of a number of states that uses this provision to make it easier for those who are seeking necessary assistance to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, approximately 200,000 individuals and 120,000 households in the Commonwealth will lose benefits if the “categorically” eligible rules are changed. Of those 120,000 households, more than 36% are households with children.

Feeding America estimates that more than 1.5 million Pennsylvanians are food insecure. Worse, 1 in 6 of Pennsylvania’s children struggles with hunger. These numbers are staggering enough without the addition of 200,000 more who could soon be without SNAP. The current rules allow those food insecure individuals who are single parents, disabled veterans, victims of domestic violence and individuals with a disability to receive vital benefits that allow them to put a healthy, fresh meal on their table.

More alarming is the effect this rule change could have on free or reduced food programs for K through 12 schools. Across the nation, 29.7 million children receive a free or reduced meal at school. In Pennsylvania more than 167 million free or reduced lunches were provided during the last school year. These meals ensure that a child, who may not get a fresh meal at home, is able to eat at least one – but often two – meals a day. SNAP is an economic support for our already struggling food and supermarket retailers, especially those in brick and mortar locations, whose businesses operate on a very thin margin, and are further challenged by the growing on-line food delivery business.

This proposal on SNAP eligibility is heartless, callous, and Pennsylvanians cannot afford it.

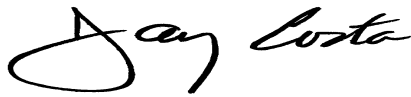
Pennsylvanians living at or near poverty recently lost the state's General Assistance program; and it has been a decade since Pennsylvania has seen a minimum wage increase. Now, the federal government is threatening to cut food assistance. We cannot continue to eliminate safety nets and the programs that move people toward self sufficiency after they have fallen on difficult times.

Societies are judged by how they treat their most vulnerable; if we let this change to SNAP go unchallenged, we will fail that judgement.

Our caucus will oppose the rule change in every way that we are able, and we ask that our federal representatives join us. We, and our constituents, thank you for the advocacy you have already undertaken.

We look forward to fighting with you, on behalf of those who need it most.

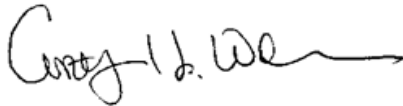
Sincerely,



Senator Jay Costa
Democratic Leader
43rd Senatorial District



Senator Vincent J. Hughes
Democratic Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
7th Senatorial District



Senator Anthony H. Williams
Senate Democratic Whip
8th Senatorial District



Senator Lawrence Farnese
Democratic Caucus Secretary
1st Senatorial District



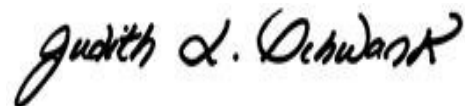
Senator Wayne D. Fontana
Democratic Caucus Chairman
42nd Senatorial District



Senator Lisa M. Boscola
Democratic Policy Chair
18th Senatorial District



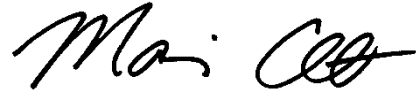
Senator John P. Blake
Democratic Caucus Administrator
22nd Senatorial District



Senator Judith L. Schwank
Democratic Vice-Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
11th Senatorial District



Senator James Brewster
45th Senatorial District



Senator Maria Collett
12th Senatorial District



Senator Andrew Dinniman
19th Senatorial District



Senator Art Haywood
4th Senatorial District



Senator-Elect Pam Iovino
37th Senatorial District



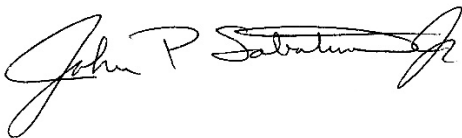
Senator Tim Kearney
26th Senatorial District



Senator Daylin M. Leach
17th Senatorial District



Senator Katie Muth
44th Senatorial District



Senator John Sabatina
5th Senatorial District



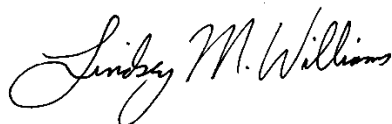
Senator Steve Santarsiero
10th Senatorial District



Senator Sharif Street
3rd Senatorial District



Senator Christine M. Tartaglione
2nd Senatorial District



Senator Lindsey Williams
38th Senatorial District



Senator John T. Yudichak
14th Senatorial District