

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2023

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write regarding time-sensitive details on impacts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility changed by the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA). We are specifically interested in the metrics your agency used to determine net changes in enrollment and the administration's plans to begin implementation of these changes in particular.

The FRA included many different provisions that came together quickly during negotiations to avoid a first of its kind default on the full faith and credit of the United States. We are eager to see your agency implement SNAP eligibility for new populations, namely the exemption from work requirements for veterans, homeless individuals, and former foster care youth—regardless of status as an able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD). We strongly support our colleagues' recent call¹ to swiftly implement SNAP exemptions for vulnerable populations.

However, we remain concerned about the changes to eligibility and increases to work requirements overall. By their own admission, the individuals who proposed these new work requirements and changes to eligibility did so as an exercise to reduce both the overall cost of SNAP and the number of individuals enrolled². We are pleased at reports³ suggesting that this attempt to push more Americans into poverty failed, but as it stands, there are still information gaps on how the eligibility changes will impact food security for Americans by age, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Additionally, the FRA included a provision to steadily increase the age of ABAWDs subject to general work requirements. We are interested in USDA's plans to communicate these changes to the newly affected populations—with the understanding that many of these individuals may not have consistent access to the internet. It is crucial that bureaucracy and red tape not prevent timely notification of these changes to individuals who depend upon this program.

¹ <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/newsroom/dem/press/release/stabenow-wyden-brown-tester-call-on-president-biden-to-swiftly-implement-snap-exemptions-for-vulnerable-populations>

² <https://apnews.com/article/debt-limit-work-requirements-snap-medicaid-biden-66270829cfc0009ddb5f59eb12a6ba7a>

³ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/debt-ceiling-deal-increase-snap-food-stamp-eligibility/story?id=99728075>

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We appreciate how rapidly these provisions came together. In order to better understand their impact on SNAP, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:


1. What will the net change in national SNAP enrollment be after USDA implements the changes from FRA?
2. Will USDA release state-level assessments of the impacts of the changes? If so, when?
3. What is the breakdown of net changes to national enrollment of SNAP recipients by the following categories: race, ethnicity, gender, age?
4. Please detail USDA's plan to communicate the changes in eligibility to the populations affected.

Thank you for your swift attention to these concerns. We would appreciate answers to these questions no later than July 10th, 2023.

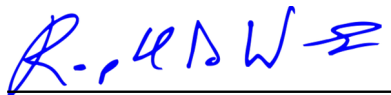
Sincerely,




John Fetterman
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator




Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

United States Senate

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CC: The Honorable Shalanda Young, Director, Office of Management and Budget