



ASSESSMENT OF H.R. 2 THE AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2018

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice believes that in our wealthy nation, ending hunger is not only possible but is a moral imperative. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps lift people out of poverty, reduces the number of people who lack access to nutritious food, and has lasting effects on people's lives. However, as the government prioritizes tax cuts for corporations over funding human needs programs, SNAP is vulnerable to funding cuts and negative structural and programmatic changes that create barriers to accessing needed nutrition assistance.

Given the principles of our faith and the proven benefits of SNAP to lift people out of poverty, provide food security, and serve as economic stimuli, **NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice calls on Congress to support, rather than undermine, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and its structure.**

Here is an assessment of the House proposal, H.R. 2, compared to NETWORK's SNAP Principles:

H.R. 2 Fails Principle 1: Protect and maintain the basic program design of SNAP.

It is effective, efficient, and helps put food on the tables of 42 million people. Any changes or alleged cost savings approaches to SNAP should not affect the program's flexibility and effectiveness in supplementing recipients' purchasing power for basic nutrition.

- H.R. 2 would impose significant new mandates and roll back crucial areas of flexibility designed to make SNAP easier for states to administer and for recipients to navigate.
- H.R. 2 would shift more than \$20 billion over 10 years from direct nutrition assistance benefits, opting instead to fund inadequate skills and job training programs and burdensome administrative systems.
- H.R. 2 would end USDA funding for projects aimed at improving program access, thereby hindering innovative approaches for getting food to hungry people and families.

H.R. 2 Fails Principle 2: Do not cap or limit SNAP funding.

Caps on funding or other limitations would restrict access to food for those who need it. SNAP benefits should take into account variables like family size and the real cost of food to ensure adequate resources.

- H.R. 2 would end the categorical eligibility option for states. States use this option to adjust SNAP income limits for families with limited household earnings and considerable expenses. Ending this option would especially punish working-poor families by cutting off needed benefits.
- H.R. 2 would apply an untested child support mandate to custodial and non-custodial parents in order to qualify for SNAP benefits. Bureaucratic hurdles would be prohibitive to many single parents. Tying nutrition benefits to compliance with the mandate would restrict nutrition assistance to single-parent homes.

H.R. 2 Passes Principle 3: Prioritize access to fresh produce and choice.

SNAP should uphold human dignity, which includes choice and does not stigmatize recipients. The program should encourage and increase recipients' access to fresh produce and healthy foods over packaged and processed foods.

- H.R. 2 would allow online merchants to accept SNAP benefits as retail food stores, expanding participants' choice.
- H.R. 2 would allow retailers to give bonuses to SNAP participants based on the purchases of fruit, vegetables, and milk.
- H.R. 2 increases grants to states for nutrition education by \$57 million in 2019 and reauthorizes the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program. Together, these programs provide incentives, and test their effectiveness, to improve nutrition.

H.R. 2 Fails Principle 4: Reject mandatory work requirements.

Any additional employment-related provisions applied to the SNAP program should focus on providing workforce development and job training opportunities, rather than simply tying eligibility for SNAP benefits to employment. SNAP already has work requirements, which allow for state flexibility with local labor market conditions. H.R. 2 ends state flexibility and makes existing requirements stricter and more rigid, increasing the amount of burdensome documentation for low-income workers.

- H.R. 2 applies the 20 hours a week requirement to an older cohort of SNAP recipients, raising the age from 49 years (under current rules) to 59 years old.
- H.R. 2 applies work requirement to parents of dependent children as young as 6 years old; currently parents of minor dependents under 18 years old are not subject to work requirements.
- Under H.R. 2, work requirements of 20 hours weekly would increase to 25 hours in 2026.
- H.R. 2 would require states to track and monitor monthly employment records for millions of participants. Creating and managing these new state administrative systems of unprecedented scale and complexity puts benefits for millions of Americans at risk.
- H.R. 2 would sanction SNAP recipients from the program for a year if they fall out of compliance in any given month, and impose an additional sanction of three years with their second infraction. Unforgiving penalties leave people one mistake away from losing the help they need to buy food.
- Under H.R. 2, approximately 3 million slots a month for employment and training would be needed to provide all SNAP participants the opportunity to satisfy the new work requirements. But funding under H.R. 2 would average only \$30 per person per month to meet that need, far short of the cost of meaningful employment assistance.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: H.R. 2 fails our faith principles and undermines the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice calls on Congress to reject this partisan measure and instead use the remaining time before the expiration of the current Farm Bill to work together on a bipartisan proposal that will benefit the common good.