



## **Second Harvest Food Bank Statement on USDA SNAP Rules Change March 4, 2019**

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina is deeply concerned that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to push a policy that will take essential and basic nutrition away from people struggling with food insecurity and that ignores the market forces that make food insecurity a reality for too many of our neighbors.

The USDA's proposed rule would restrict states' ability to waive time limits on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in high unemployment areas, removing an estimated 8.5 billion meals over the next decade from the tables of some of the most vulnerable in our communities. This rule would increase the risk of food insecurity for nearly one million people, putting additional pressure on the Feeding American network of food banks, of which Second Harvest is a part, and locally on our network of over 460 on-the-ground partner programs here in Northwest North Carolina. Private charity simply cannot compensate for the breadth of the impact of cuts to the program, as SNAP provides 12 meals for each meal provided by Second Harvest and other Feeding America food banks.

Removing access to healthy, nutritious food for so many people will not only impact their personal health, but will worsen the health of our communities— something that would affect us all.

Unemployed or underemployed adults without dependents already face strict time limits for receiving benefits if they are unable to find work. Specifically, adults ages 18 to 50, who do not receive disability benefits and do not have children, are only able to receive SNAP benefits for three months, over the course of a three-year period, unless they are working at least 20 hours a week or taking part in a comparable workforce program or training.

This rule is aimed at individuals who are in great need of our help—people without resources who are unemployed. According to Feeding America, the average income of an unemployed or underemployed adult without dependents while enrolled in SNAP is just 18 percent of the poverty line or about \$2,171 per year in 2018. On average, that person's SNAP benefit equates to \$170 per month. It is inconceivable that we would deny food assistance to a person trying to live on just over \$2,000 annually.

The reality of low-wage employment here in Northwest North Carolina is that even if individuals are willing to work more they often face volatile job schedules and insufficient work hours while often managing bus schedules or other transportation challenges.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina strongly opposes the USDA Rules Change proposal and ask our friends, supporters, and partners to do the same.

The public has 60 days to submit comments to USDA – deadline April 2, 2019 – and it is imperative that the Administration hear just how dangerous this proposal is to the health and well-being of many Americans. We encourage the public to submit comments in opposition to this proposal, and we encourage the Administration to rescind this rule.

**Submit Your Comments [HERE](#)**