



MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ

**City of Northampton
Office of the Mayor**

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August 25, 2017

The Honorable Jim McGovern
Second Congressional District
12 East Worcester Street, Suite 1
Worcester, MA 01604

The Honorable Ed Markey
975 JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
2400 JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203

Dear Senators Warren & Markey and Congressman McGovern:

I am writing to thank you for your strong support of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to ask you to please oppose any of the proposed cuts, limits on eligibility, or efforts to block grant this program that are currently being considered by Congress.

As you know, SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. Almost 10% of Massachusetts residents currently face food insecurity – not knowing where their next meal is coming from – on a regular basis. SNAP benefits help support the most vulnerable households in our communities, annually serving approximately 1 in 9 residents (or 450,000 low income households statewide) including approximately 34,802 households in the 2nd Congressional District. According to the Department of Transitional Assistance:

- 72% of SNAP households in Massachusetts have income below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level –\$16,240 a year for a family of 2.
- Approximately half of Massachusetts SNAP recipients are seniors or have a disability and 36% are children. Most non-disabled adults are working or looking for work.
- The average household benefit is just \$214 per month —about \$7 a day.

SNAP benefits low-income families and stimulates rural and urban economies and businesses in Massachusetts. More than 5,000 local grocers accept SNAP in Massachusetts. Moody's Analytics estimates that every \$1 in federal SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in local economies. \$1.2 billion are issued in federal SNAP benefits annually to Massachusetts, generating over \$2 billion per year for Massachusetts's economy.

Cities and towns need a robust SNAP program to reduce hunger. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts serves more than 223,000 food insecure people throughout Western Massachusetts through partnerships with our member agencies, the food industry, and local, state and federal governments. This informal network collects donations, distributes food, and provides relief to our hungry residents every day. Unfortunately, it's not enough to close the hunger gap without SNAP.

Using block-grants (or "State Opportunity Grants") to restructure the SNAP program would change the program from an entitlement structure to fixed annual funding. This would render the program unable to automatically respond to increased need, as states would then have to cut eligibility or establish waiting lists to stay within capped funding. Making structural changes or other cuts to SNAP would severely diminish the program's capacity to respond to hunger in our communities.

Once again, thank you for past support of the SNAP program. Please oppose any cuts, limits on eligibility, or efforts to block grant this vital program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Narkewicz", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David J. Narkewicz
Mayor, City of Northampton