



**THE CITY OF PITTSFIELD**  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**Linda M. Tyer**  
Mayor

August 31, 2017

The Honorable Richard Neal  
First Congressional District  
300 State Street Suite 200  
Springfield, MA 01105

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

**RE: Defend/Protect Federal Nutrition Programs in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District**

Dear Senators Markey, Warren and Congressman Neal:

We are writing to you, as Representative of the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District and our two Senate members, to express our strong support for SNAP. As elected representatives from a diverse range of cities and communities across the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, we urge you to support SNAP, and oppose any cuts, limits on eligibility, or efforts to block grant the SNAP program.

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate are currently considering making drastic cuts and changes to the structure of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program, through either the 2017 Budget Reconciliation process or the 2018 Farm Bill re-authorization.

As you are aware, SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger, affecting the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District of Massachusetts — including cities and towns in Hamden, Franklin and Hampshire Counties. 9.7% 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 1st 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

Our 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 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District or the Commonwealth 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.

As elected representatives from a diverse range of cities and communities across the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, we write to urge you to support SNAP, and oppose any cuts, limits on eligibility, or efforts to block grant the SNAP program.

Sincerely,

  
Linda M. Tyer, Mayor