



March 15, 2019

We—the undersigned faith-based organizations representing various religious organizations, denominations, and faith traditions—are united in our commitment to reduce hunger and improve nutrition in the U.S. Our diverse values and holy scriptures instruct us to ensure that everyone may live with dignity and the opportunity to recognize their full potential. We join together to care for those who are poor and vulnerable, including over 40 million Americans facing hunger.

We have serious concerns about the Trump Administration’s notice for proposed rulemaking which would restrict states’ flexibility to provide vital nutrition support to people who struggle to feed themselves and their families.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of our nation’s nutrition safety net, and most SNAP recipients who can work do work. Under current law, childless unemployed and underemployed adults age 18-50 are restricted to only 90 days of SNAP benefits in three years unless they can prove that they are working or participating in an employment and training program for 20 hours per week. States currently have flexibility to waive this harsh and arbitrary time limit for communities that face high unemployment or insufficient jobs. USDA is trying to severely limit this critically important and common-sense flexibility that is utilized by the majority of states.

This new attack against SNAP is an attempt to circumvent congressional intent as laid out in the recently-passed bipartisan Farm Bill reauthorization, and it could not be more out of touch with the reality of struggling American workers. Instead of rulemaking that jeopardizes food assistance for struggling Americans, USDA should focus on implementing the 2018 Farm Bill provisions that will help Americans get back to work.

By USDA’s own estimate, the proposed rule change would result in 775,000 people losing access to life-saving nutrition benefits. The proposal completely ignores the realities of people who work inconsistent hours, lack access to transportation, live in areas where the economy has been slow to recover, or are unable to access employment and training programs—all of whom could fail to meet the harsh time limits imposed on SNAP recipients.

Many of our organizations, congregations, and leaders work to feed, clothe, house, and serve our friends and neighbors who are struggling, but we know that we cannot do this work alone. More than 40 million American men, women, and children struggle to put food on the table on a regular basis. While charitable organizations play a vital role in addressing hunger, we know that the overwhelming majority of food assistance in this country has historically come from—

and must continue to come from—federal programs. Simply put: the charitable food sector is in no way equipped to respond to the scope of food insecurity in America.

Our values and traditions compel us to honor the dignity of every person, especially those who are struggling. No matter a person's circumstance, no one deserves to be hungry.

Signed:

American Conference of Cantors
Aytzim: Ecological Judaism
Bread for the World
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Episcopal Church
Faith in Public Life
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Men of Reform Judaism
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Office of Justice and Ecology, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America
Poligon Education Fund
Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Sojourners
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
Women of Reform Judaism