



## **Alliance to End Hunger Disappointed in USDA Final Rule to Strip SNAP Benefits from 700,000 Unemployed Individuals**

December 5, 2019

WASHINGTON DC, December 5, 2019 – Yesterday, USDA released a new rule tightening work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) relating to Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs). It tightens the criteria that states must meet to get waivers from existing work requirements for ABAWDs. Currently, thirty-six states have waivers for parts of their state where unemployment is highest.<sup>i</sup>

The Alliance to End Hunger [opposed the rule](#) when it was proposed earlier this year. The proposal received more than 140,000 comments, largely in opposition to the plan. We are deeply disappointed the administration has moved ahead with this misguided policy that, by USDA’s own estimates, will take SNAP benefits way from almost 700,000 unemployed or underemployed individuals.

Unfortunately, a strong economy—the stated rationale for this change—does not benefit all people equally. Those most negatively affected by this rule will be people with the greatest barriers to employment – including those with less than a high school education, people living in rural areas, and people of color. While this change might seem innocuous or even advantageous to the casual observer, it is worth noting that most states don’t offer any job or training opportunities to SNAP participants.

Distressingly, USDA made an additional change in the final rule on requirements for states to request waivers when experiencing rapidly rising unemployment, which is often an indicator of a coming recession. The change would require the state rely on historical rather than current labor market data, delaying the state’s response to a recession. This will compromise one of the great strengths of SNAP—its rapid response in the face of an economic downturn.

We fully recognize and support work as a gateway to food security. However, the practice of tying nutrition support to work requirements is misguided. Proper nutrition is necessary to maintain a healthy and productive workforce. USDA should provide a path to employment for SNAP recipients that does not withhold needed food. Further, the Administration should promote policies such as improving job training and employment programs, enforcing fair labor practices, and strengthening the Earned Income Tax Credit.

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*The Alliance to End Hunger is a coalition of nearly 100 members—corporations, non-profits, faith-based organizations, universities, foundations, international organizations, and individuals—with a shared conviction that addressing hunger is essential.*

See statements from Alliance member organizations denouncing the SNAP rule:

Share Our Strength: <https://www.nokidhungry.org/who-we-are/pressroom/statement-white-house-releases-final-rule-imposing-stricter-snap-work>

Feeding America: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/press-room/feeding-america-statement-final-usda-rule-will-cut-snap-680000-people>

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<sup>1</sup> The rule these states are seeking to waive is a requirement to limit SNAP eligibility to just three months out of every three years for unemployed and underemployed adults without dependent children unless they can document 20 hours of work a week (or are in an approved work or training program). To receive a waiver a state demonstrates high unemployment or lack of jobs.