

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Price
Chairman
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Lead Pelosi, Chairman Price, and Ranking Member Van Hollen,

As the Budget Committee works towards a federal budget, we write to urge you to preserve the integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and not block grant one of the most powerful tools we have for ending childhood hunger in the United States today. We are greatly concerned that block granting this vital safety-net program will be robbing a program of its greatest strength: its ability to expand in times of economic or natural disaster, and then retract when conditions improve.

For more than four decades, SNAP has been a fundamental bulwark for the poorest and hungriest people in our nation. Deemed “a government reform that worked” by the National Journal, SNAP serves as the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. In fact, SNAP is such a success, that in 2014 the program helped lift 4.7 million Americans out of poverty, including 2.1 million children. Additionally, when compared to other government programs, SNAP is far more effective than any other program in lifting families out of deep poverty. SNAP is also successful at reaching key vulnerable populations. Three-fourths of SNAP households are families with children, seniors, or people with disabilities. And because SNAP benefits are so urgently needed by families, they are spent quickly--97 percent of benefits are redeemed by the end of the month of issuance.

By design, SNAP is able to react quickly and robustly to economic problems. When a regional, state, or area economy is in trouble, the program is among the most effective government responses and is able to reach those who need it most. This has been seen most clearly and dramatically since the start of the recession in 2008, when millions of people became

newly unemployed or underemployed. SNAP responded during this time to provide desperately needed help, and put food on the table for millions of American families. We also saw the same responsiveness in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Thousands of families sought safety and shelter in neighboring cities, and SNAP benefits were able to expand rapidly to meet the increased need in Gulf Coast states.

The SNAP program also has a strong work incentive. For every additional dollar a SNAP recipient earns, their benefits decline by only 24 to 36 cents — much less than in most other programs. Families that receive SNAP thus have a strong incentive to work longer hours or to search for better-paying employment. Furthermore, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the number of SNAP participants is expected to decline by over 11 million people over the next ten years, reducing budget outlays for the SNAP program by \$ 800 million. This is the beauty of the SNAP program in its current form; it increases support to the food insecure during times of economic hardship, and scales back spending as the economy grows and people return to work.

There has been much talk about changing the SNAP structure and turning the funds over to governors and state legislators as a block grant. For the 45 million Americans relying on the SNAP program, we urge you to reject this proposal. Shifting this program to a block grant, and limiting states to a set amount of funding, means that states would be faced with impossible choices as need increased: Do they cut benefits, or do they place children and seniors on waiting lists for food assistance? Doing so would roll back a generation of progress against very deep hunger, and destroy a bipartisan compact that has developed and sustained a strong and effective national nutrition safety net.

We firmly agree with the President, who said, “Food stamp recipients did not cause the financial crisis; recklessness on Wall Street did.” Instead of attacking the SNAP program, the House budget should focus on economic growth and job creation, including strengthening the SNAP program so that participants are better positioned to take advantage of education and work opportunities as the economy improves.

If SNAP is block granted, many millions of seniors, people with disabilities, children, struggling parents – working and unemployed – and others will suffer. Our country will also see more hunger and poverty, worse health and educational outcomes, and higher health costs. The nation as a whole will be weaker – morally, economically, and fiscally. Please stand with us in ensuring that the federal budget would not harm low-income households, increase hunger, and dilute SNAP’s strengths.

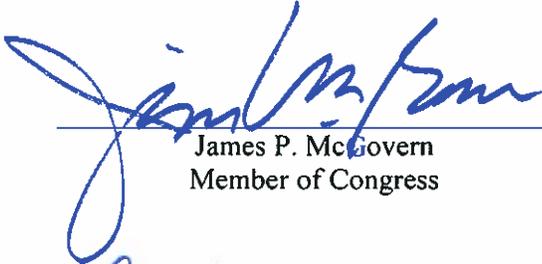
Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, PhD.
Member of Congress



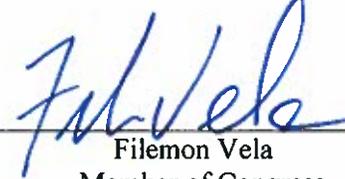
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



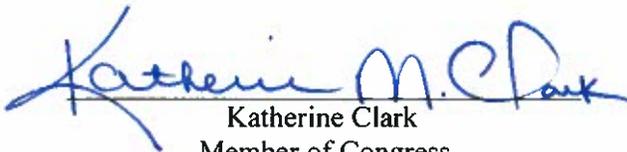
Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



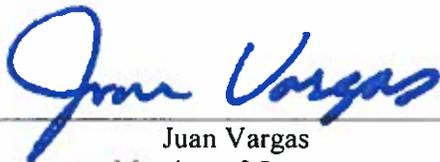
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



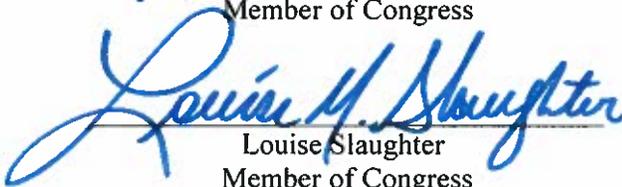
Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



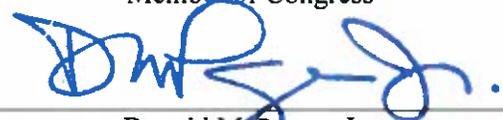
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Linda Sánchez
Member of Congress



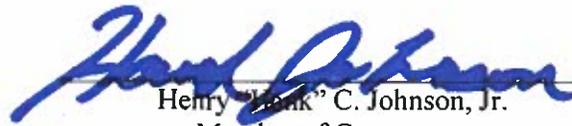
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



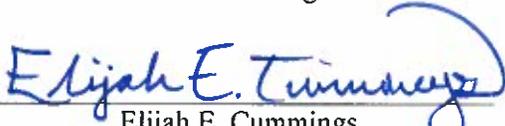
Robin Kelly
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



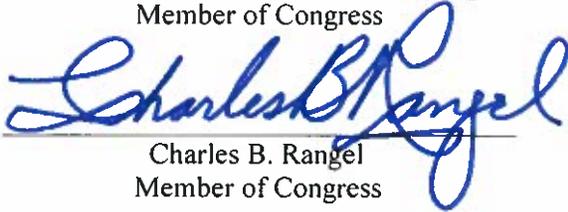
Henry "Buck" C. Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



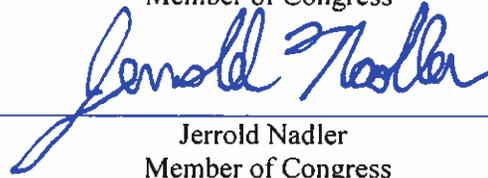
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



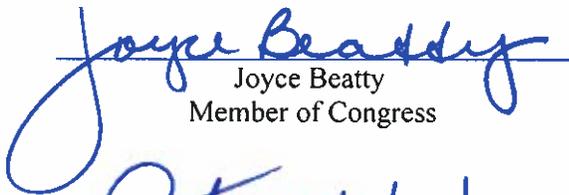
Susan Davis
Member of Congress



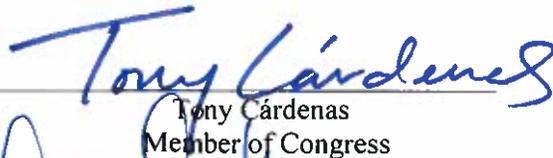
Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



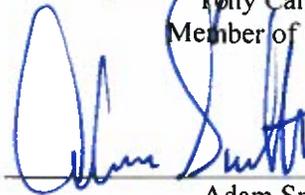
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



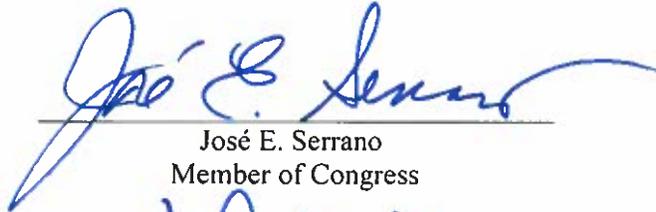
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



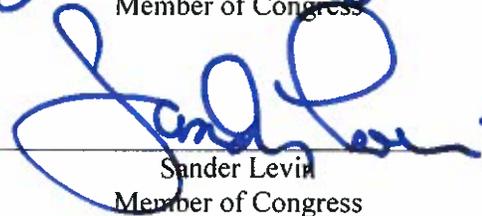
José E. Serrano
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Elizabeth H. Esty
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Jared Huffman
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Sander Levin
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Henry Cuellar
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Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



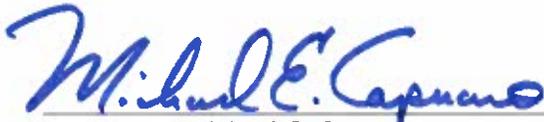
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Mark Desaulnier
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



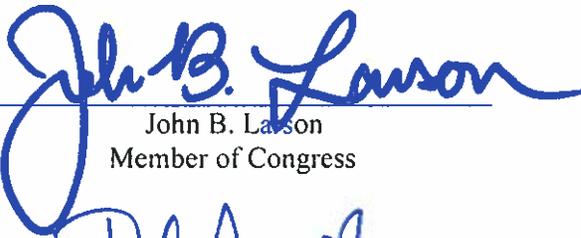
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



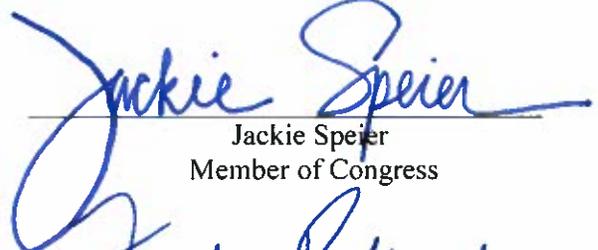
Niki Tsongas
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Richard M. Nolan
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John B. Larson
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Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress



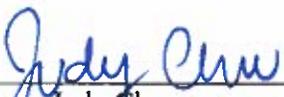
Janice Hahn
Member of Congress



Brad Ashford
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress

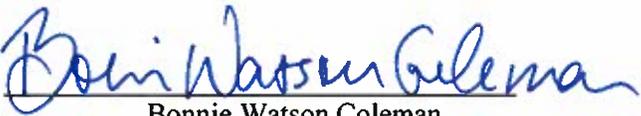

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

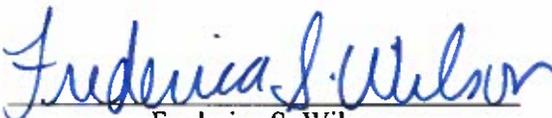

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress


Tim Walz
Member of Congress


Betty McCollum
Member of Congress


Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress


Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

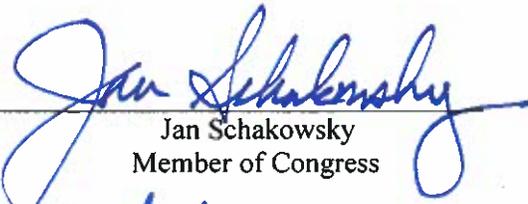

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress


Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress


Lois Capps
Member of Congress


William R. Keating
Member of Congress


Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

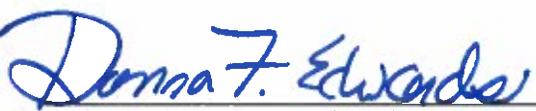

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress


Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

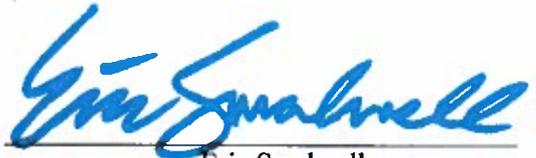

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress


Donna F. Edwards
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Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



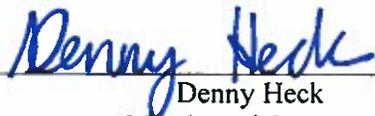
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



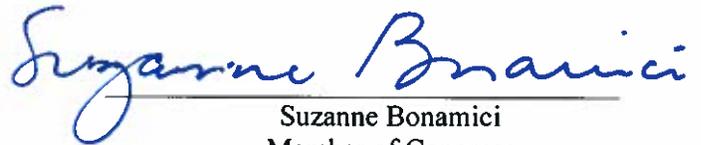
Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



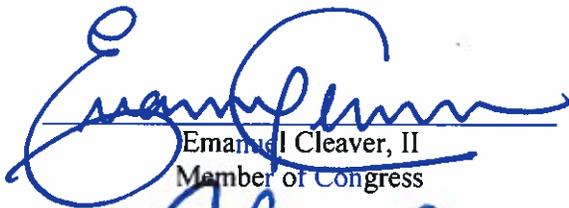
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



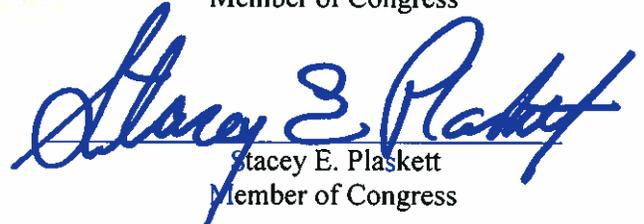
Denny Heck
Member of Congress



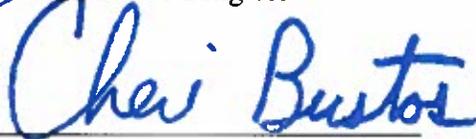
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



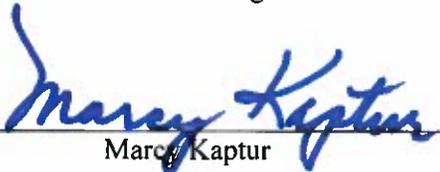
G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



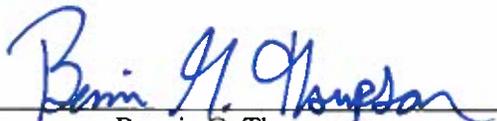
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Gwen Graham
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



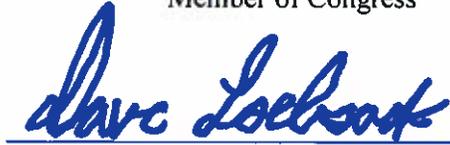
Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



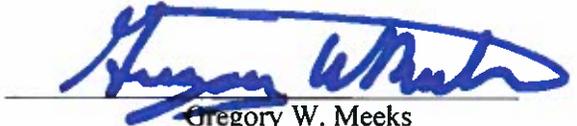
Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress



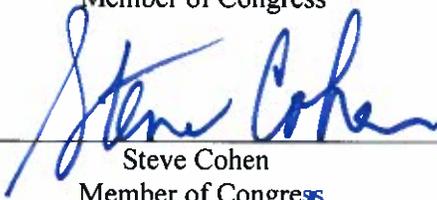
Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



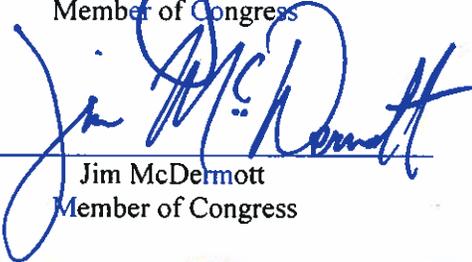
Mike M. Honda
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Dan Kildee
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Jim Langevin
Member of Congress



Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



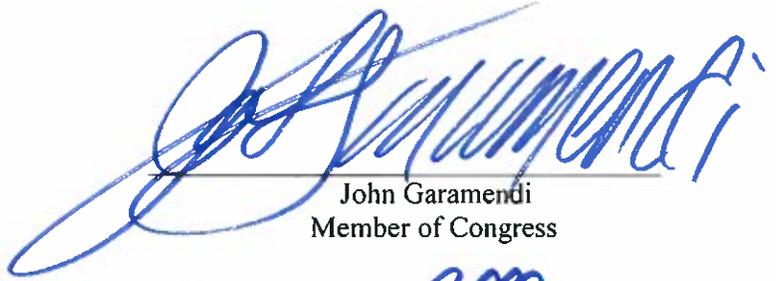
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



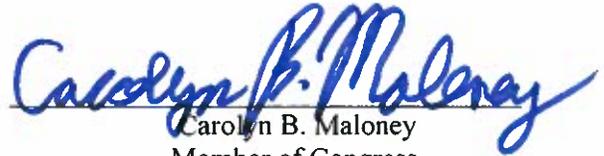
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Ami Bera
Member of Congress



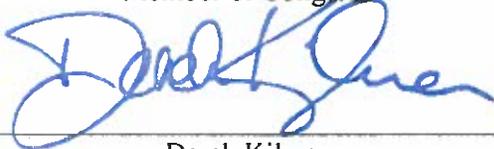
Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



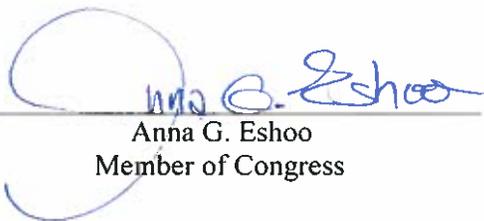
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress



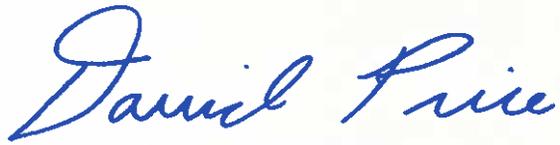
Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



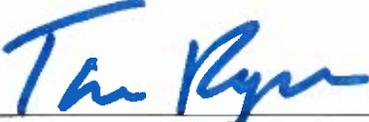
André Carson
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



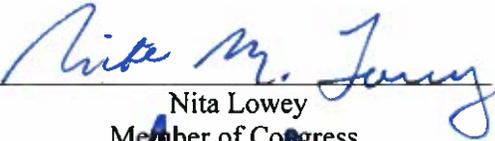
David Price
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



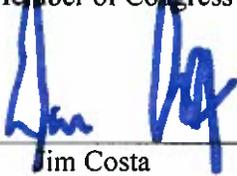
C.A. Dutch Ruppensberger
Member of Congress



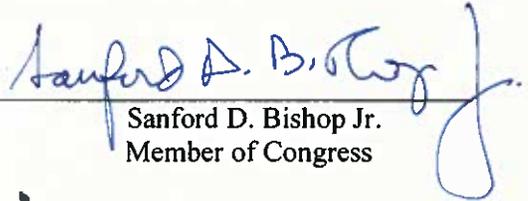
Nita Lowey
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress