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American Association of Health and Human Services Attorneys (AAHSA)

Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC)

American Association of SNAP Directors (AASD)

IT Solutions Management for Human Services (ISM)

National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA)

National Association for Program Information and Performance Measurement (NAPIPM)

National Association of State Child Care Administrators (NASCCA)

National Association of State TANF Administrators (NASTA)

National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA)

May 2, 2018

Chairman K. Michael Conaway
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

The attached document represents the American Public Human Services Association's initial response to sections of *H.R. 2 - The Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018* (Farm Bill) related particularly to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is a bipartisan, nonprofit membership organization representing state and local health and human services agencies through their top-level leadership. We reach positions through a representative internal process that involves and relies on our state and local members, in this case through our two Collaborative Centers, the Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being (CEEWB) and the National Collaborative for the Integration of Health and Human Services working in connection with our affinity groups, the American Association of SNAP Directors (AASD) and the National Association of Program Information and Performance Measurement (NAPIPM). We reserve the right to amplify these preliminary reactions to the House Farm Bill Nutrition Title IV, as we understand more of its details and ramifications for our members and the clients we serve.

We occupy a unique and highly credible niche to comment on legislation because our members are the practitioners on the ground that deliver benefits and services daily under SNAP and multiple other health and human service programs. Our states are diverse in their thinking and approach to service delivery and come together under the banner of APHSA to make unified statements that have been vetted internally and approved by our Policy Leadership Council. We never encumber and in fact encourage each individual state and local member of APHSA to submit individual comments on legislative and regulatory matters such as this draft House Farm Bill. For further information about APHSA's recommendations for SNAP reauthorization, please contact Rus Sykes at rsykes@aphsa.org and Kerry Desjardins at kdesjardins@aphsa.org.

Sincerely,

Tracy Wareing Evans

President and CEO, APHSA

Nikole R. Cox

Chair, AASD

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Senior Fellow, APHSA

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Chair, NAPIPM

American Public Human Services Association pursues excellence in health and human services by supporting state and local agencies, informing policymakers, and working with our partners to drive innovative, integrated, and efficient solutions in policy and practice.

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**Preliminary Response of the American Public Human Services Association
Response to the Sections in the Title IV Nutrition Portion
of the Proposed House Farm Bill Reauthorization**

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**TITLE IV—NUTRITION
SUBTITLE A—SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Sec. 4001. Duplicative Enrollment Database.

Subsection (a) of section 4001 amends the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by adding at the end, section 30 to establish the Duplicative Enrollment Database to be used by States when making eligibility determinations to prevent SNAP participants from receiving duplicative benefits in multiple States. Subsection (a) also requires the Secretary to publish an annual report using data submitted to the Database that analyzes SNAP participant characteristics including tenure on the program.

Subsection (b) amends section 11(e) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require States to collect and submit SNAP participant data to the Duplicative Enrollment Database in accordance with guidance or rules issued by the Secretary that will be used by the Secretary to generate the annual reports required under subsection (a).

APHSA Response: APHSA supports all reasonable means such as this Duplicate Enrollment Database that began as a successful pilot effort in several states as the National Accuracy Data Clearinghouse (NAC), to ensure that benefits are received only by those eligible and not in more than one state simultaneously. Our only concerns prior to full support are whether states are being given sufficient time and resources for system development and to assure recipient privacy measures and appropriate data security is in place. We would like an explanation as to the purpose of keeping historical case records with personal identifying information, with no apparent time limit on the retention of such records, as well as the federal government's need for such data.

Sec. 4002. Retailer-Funded Incentives Pilot.

Section 4002 amends the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (as amended by Section 4001) by adding at the end, section 31, which establishes a pilot project through which authorized retail food stores may provide bonuses to participating SNAP households based on household purchases of fruits, vegetables, and milk. Retail food stores participating in the pilot project may be reimbursed in an amount not to exceed 25 percent of the dollar value of bonuses earned by households and used to purchase SNAP-eligible foods. Section 4002 directs the Secretary to provide no more than \$120,000,000 annually for such reimbursements.

APHSA Response: APHSA has not fully studied this pilot proposal to allow retail food stores to provide bonuses to households based on their purchases of fruits, vegetables, and milk and offset their costs of such bonuses by up to 25 percent. On its face this seems promising and likely has grown out of the success of similar programs at farmer's markets. We are sure retailers will want to join in this effort but would like to learn more about its operation, the source of the \$120 million in annual funding, and how the proposed scale comports with any reduction in eligibility.

In the SNAP reauthorization paper APHSA released last year¹, we suggested two other approaches to healthy food purchasing and discouraging the use of SNAP benefits on unhealthy purchases that USDA-FNS require: 1) new shelf space minimums for the display of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables at large retail stores participating in SNAP and 2) implement pilot projects in geographically diverse areas to prohibit the purchase of certain sugar sweetened beverages with SNAP. We urged that both efforts be thoroughly evaluated as to their impact on healthy food purchasing and better health outcomes. We hope you reconsider both issues and entertain floor amendments when the bill comes before the full House for debate.

Sec. 4003. Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program.

Subsection (a) amends section 4405 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to rename the program the Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program. The subsection also amends the program by limiting the program incentives to financial incentives, updating program priorities, and requiring the Secretary to consult with the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to establish a training, evaluation, and information center for use by program grantees. Subsection (a) reauthorizes the program through fiscal year 2023 and provides mandatory funding levels of \$45,000,000 for fiscal year 2019; \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2020; \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2021; \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2022; and \$65,000,000 for 2023 and each fiscal year thereafter.

¹ See APHSA's policy recommendations in *The Future of SNAP – A Modern and Responsive System*, available at <https://aphsa.org/CEEWB/default.aspx>.



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Subsection (b) makes a conforming amendment to the table of contents of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to reflect the change of the program name made under subsection (a).

APHSA Response: APHSA supports the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program as one program that has demonstrated some positive outcomes in food purchasing and is pleased that the legislation also requires training, evaluation, and an information center.

Sec. 4004. Re-Evaluation of Thrifty Food Plan.

Section 4004 amends section 3(u) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to, by 2022, and at five-year intervals, require a re-evaluation and publication of the Thrifty Food Plan.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports such a periodic re-evaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) every five years in order to understand more fully its adequacy as the underpinning to determining the allotment of SNAP benefits for participating households. We previously suggested and hope you will consider during floor debate that several pilots be implemented to test either an enhanced TFP or use of the Low-Cost Food Plan to determine allotments. Pilots such as this would provide additional evidence as to the correct allotment basis that would further reduce food insecurity.

Sec. 4005. Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations.

Section 4005 amends section 4(b) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to strike surveying and reporting requirements regarding traditional foods, to include regionally-grown in addition to traditional and locally-grown foods, and to allow appropriated funds for the program to remain available for two fiscal years.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports these improvements that will lead to better service delivery, expanded local and cultural product integrity, and predictable, stable funding.

Sec. 4006. Update to Categorical Eligibility.

Section 4006 amends section 5(a) and 5(j) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 such that categorical eligibility may only be used in instances where a beneficiary is receiving either cash assistance or ongoing and substantial services such as transportation, childcare, counseling, or other services funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act with an income eligibility limit of not more than 130% (200% for elderly or disabled) of the poverty line.

APHSA Response: Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for SNAP brings over 400,000 near poor households into the program who would otherwise likely be ineligible, either due to asset limitations and/or the 130 percent gross income eligibility ceiling in the program. BBCE was a necessary work around to acknowledge that for some families, mostly working families with high child care costs, shelter costs, and other large expenses, they would remain ineligible because existing deductions for such costs are inadequate.

Over 40 states and territories with both Republican and Democrat leadership have taken advantage of this provision to increase or eliminate asset tests and 31 have increased the gross income limit in some instances up to 200 percent of poverty or some lower level still above 130 percent of poverty to comport with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) eligibility limits for services. States also currently have the option to expand the vehicle allowance. These options remain purposeful and were bipartisan in nature. They allow states to ease the SNAP cutoff level, help more working families receive benefits, and encourage work. While we recognize that the bill increases asset limits, we have commented in our response to Section 4012 that renewing the assets test creates significant administrative burdens for states.

Removing the BBCE option is troubling, as it will reinstate a new benefit cliff and limit state flexibility. It also will create the same new QC issues in case review, particularly around asset verification, that we outline in detail below in our response to Section 4012. Given that the majority of APHSA member states have availed themselves of the option, *we do not support this provision in Section 4006.*

Sec. 4007. Child support; cooperation with child support agencies.

Subsection (a) of section 4007 amends section 5(e) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, striking the State option to provide a deduction from income for child support payments, therefore requiring all states to provide an exclusion for child support payments.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this modest improvement that will slightly increase benefits and eligibility for some SNAP households but recognizes that for states that currently deduct rather than exclude child support income there must be a transition period included in the bill for necessary system changes.

Subsection (b) of section 4007 amends section 6(l)(1) and 6(m)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to eliminate the State option of child support cooperation for custodial and noncustodial parents, thus requiring cooperation. Subsection (b) also strikes section 6(n), eliminating SNAP disqualification for child support arrears.

APHSA Response: While APHSA understands the rationale for proposing mandatory child support cooperation for both custodial and non-custodial parents participating in SNAP, doing so will pose both new system and administrative problems for states. Ideally, both parents should contribute to their children economically and socially and in SNAP they do to a large degree, as child support orders are already in place for the majority of SNAP families.

Hence we have serious reservations about the time it would take to implement this provision, the significant systems cost it would require, the caseload burdens it would place on an already overstretched IV-D system, whether or not it would actually increase child support payments, and the fact that it almost certainly will result in otherwise eligible needy families losing SNAP benefits and jeopardizing their food security. For a number of our states, it will be a huge and costly increase to the IV-D caseload—a 30 percent increase or 230,000 new cases in New York and a 36 percent increase or 137,000 new cases in Pennsylvania for instance. Dealing with increases of that magnitude will have to be handled by local Child Support Units, and further it will be a burden on the Family Courts. Additionally, if a non-custodial parent in existing cases is not already known to a State's IV-D system, there is no way to identify them, because states can only ask such questions of the custodial parent about cooperation at application for new enrollees or at recertification for those already on the caseload.

A landmark study in Utah and national data from the U.S. Census show that over 70 percent of SNAP families already have child support orders in effect and that various reasons lead to not having an order in place that have nothing to do with non-cooperation. Instead they include the inability to locate the non-custodial parent, the risk of domestic violence in some instances, and the existence of amicable and reasonable informal payment arrangements with the non-custodial parent. One area we do support as noted above, is requiring the exclusion of child support income in the calculation of benefits, which is a modest improvement over treating income as a deduction.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the administrative costs of this provision would be \$7.2 billion over 10 years and the savings in SNAP benefits would be only \$3.4 billion over 10 years due predominantly to sanctions not increased child support payments. Not only do the costs outweigh the savings by more than 2:1, needy households will lose SNAP benefits. *For these reasons, we cannot support this section of the bill without major changes and protections against the problems we have cited or, if it is enacted, ample transitional time for system development and training.* States already have the option to decide on child support cooperation rules in SNAP and penalize households for clear non-compliance and some states already take advantage of this option. We see no valid reason to mandate cooperation nationally – instead it should remain a state option.

Sec. 4008. Basic allowance for housing.

Subsection (a) amends section 5(d) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to exclude up to \$500 of a housing allowance received under section 403 of title 37 of the United States Code from any calculation of income when determining eligibility to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

Subsection (b) amends section 5(e)(6)(A) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 so a household that receives the allowance covered by section 403 of title 37 of the United States Code can only claim expenses in excess of that allowance when determining the household's expenses for the excess shelter deduction.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision to standardize the housing allowance nationally for active military families who participate in SNAP. Although active military are a small portion of overall SNAP participants, we should make sure that we do not count as income a portion of their military housing allowance in determining program eligibility. However, due to the high costs of housing in many areas where military bases are located, we do not think the \$500 exclusion will be sufficient and urge further study of an appropriate exclusion amount.

Sec. 4009. Earned income deduction.

Section 4009 amends section 5(e)(2)(B) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to increase from 20 to 22 the percentage of a household's earned income that may be deducted for purposes of calculating of income when determining eligibility to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision that increases the earned income deduction (EID) for working individuals and families who participate in SNAP. While modest, it will increase needed SNAP benefits for the many working families in the program. APHSA has previously suggested the EID be increased to 30 percent to further support and supplement the wages of the numerous working families on SNAP.

Sec. 4010. Simplified homeless housing costs.

Section 4008 amends section 5(e)(6)(D) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require that States provide a simplified homeless housing deduction of \$143, adjusted for inflation, for homeless individuals not receiving free housing during the month.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision to standardize a simplified homeless housing deduction nationwide in SNAP for those not being sheltered or housed. While a number of states already do this voluntarily, it is a reasonable step to assist families and individuals as well as simplify eligibility determinations for homeless individuals.

Sec. 4011. Availability of Standard Utility Allowances based on receipt of energy assistance.

Subsection (a) of section 4011 amends section 5(e)(6)(C)(iv)(I) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by limiting the availability of the Standard Utility Allowance for heating and cooling costs to those households consisting of an elderly member. Subsection (a) also makes a conforming amendment to Section 2605(f)(2)(A) of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act.

Subsection (b) of section 4011 amends section 5(k)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 so that third party energy assistance payments are considered money payable directly to households without an elderly member for purposes of calculating exclusions to income, and are no longer considered out-of-pocket expenses for such households for determination of the excess shelter expense deduction.

APHSA Response: APHSA recognizes the program rationale for this change to ensure that elderly households, as well as non-elderly households that directly pay for heating and cooling costs rather than having such costs included in rent by a third party, can still benefit from the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). However, this provision goes further than just eliminating the ability of states to make nominal LIHEAP payments to households to generate access to the SNAP SUA. Instead it completely delinks the receipt of LIHEAP by non-elderly households to the SNAP SUA and requires actual receipts from all non-elderly households in order to receive the SNAP SUA. This link to LIHEAP, unlike the nominal payment, is not a work around but a longstanding method for simplified determination of eligibility for the SUA

Since LIHEAP benefits go to low-income households that have out of pocket utility costs only partially offset by LIHEAP, this allowance reduces unnecessary paperwork for both states and poor households. This provision would end the simplification and require these households to provide documentation of utility costs to continue receiving the SUA, which again is a significant administrative burden. This provision is an unnecessary overreach and should be removed from the bill. At the very least, if it remains, we urge the House to follow the suggestion of Agriculture Committee Vice Chair Glenn Thompson during the April 18, 2018 committee mark-up, who stated that the intention was to leave it up to the states how to do verification.

For those participants who would lose access to the SUA because of delinking the two programs and even those whose energy costs are included as part of their rent, thus de facto causing higher rents, we urge House members to consider two possible amendments: 1) expanding the excess shelter deduction for such non-elderly households and people with disabilities or 2) eliminating the excess shelter deduction cap in SNAP for all households as opposed to current law, which only does so for elderly households.

Sec. 4012. Adjustment to asset limitations.

Section 4012 amends section 5(g)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by increasing from \$2,000 to \$7,000 the maximum allowable value of assets for participating households, and from \$3,000 to \$12,000 for households including an elderly or disabled member. Such levels shall be adjusted for inflation.

APHSA Response: APHSA member states appreciate these long overdue increases in asset limits in principle for both non-elderly and elderly households to avoid losing SNAP benefits as a result of modest savings, as they have not been updated in years. However, our concern is with verifying asset levels as is required under this section, as it poses a significant administrative burden on state staff and QC systems. Contacting banks is usually the only viable way to do so – other technology that could assist is very expensive. Banks are often entirely non-responsive to such verification requests or take a lengthy time to respond that goes beyond the required time that an application or recertification must be completed. When they do cooperate, banks often charge states fees for such asset verifications. Asset levels even currently, and more so under this proposal, rarely exceed limits or are the cause for denials in SNAP – one of our member states, Pennsylvania, estimated that less than one percent of denials were solely because of assets.

Therefore, we ask that you amend the bill to allow self-attestation of assets by the applicant, with clear warnings of the penalties for false statements, to be acceptable for application processing. This self-attestation to verify resources is an option that is already available to states and many of our members take advantage of it for the administrative reasons we point out.

Sec. 4013. Updated vehicle allowance.

Section 4013 amends section 5(g) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require all States to exclude \$12,000 (adjusted annually for inflation) of the value of one vehicle per licensed driver from household asset calculations. The section also strikes the alternative vehicle allowance.

APHSA Response: While APHSA appreciates the intent of establishing of a national vehicle value ceiling adjusted annually for licensed drivers, it remains burdensome for states and localities to check blue book values. It would be far simpler and more reasonable to state that a vehicle to be used by a licensed driver to seek work or for those in SNAP already working be exempt – TANF allows this already and Medicaid imposes no such asset test. This ongoing disconnect between programs is unnecessary.

Sec. 4014. Savings excluded from assets.

Section 4014 amends section 5(g) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to exclude up to \$2,000 (adjusted annually for inflation) in savings from household assets in determining eligibility for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision but again asks that self-attestation, as already allowed at state option, with warnings about the penalty for false statements, would be acceptable for application processing.

Sec. 4015. Workforce solutions.

Subsection (a) of section 4015 amends section 6(d) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require individuals age 18 to 59 to work, participate in employment and training or a work program, or any combination of work, participation in employment and training or a work program a minimum of 20 hours per week in fiscal years 2021 through 2025 and 25 hours per week in fiscal year 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter. The subsection also establishes a two-year transition period for State implementation and enforcement of the updated work requirement; establishes a revised ineligibility process allowing one month for initial compliance, requiring a 12-month ineligibility period for the first violation of the work requirement, and a 36-month ineligibility period for subsequent violations unless an individual obtains employment sufficient to meet the hourly requirement or is no longer subject to the work requirements at an earlier time; modifies the criteria that States may use to request a geographic waiver of the work requirements; updates the “15-percent” exemption criteria and process; strikes provisions related to the selection of a head of household; requires States to offer minimum services in employment and training (including offering case management services) so that every covered individual may meet the work requirements, and updates components of employment and training programs.

APHSA Response: *There is a shared commitment by state and local governments to see more work eligible individuals benefit from the currently strong economy where many jobs still go unfilled and employers are looking for qualified workers. We further believe that individuals themselves can advance their efforts in achieving sustainable employment with assistance from states and localities in our membership to manage obstacles to work and gain necessary skills that are needed in today’s economy. However, without further debate and amendment, we cannot offer support at this time for a number of the provisions in the work solutions section of the bill as currently outlined.*

The Workforce Solutions section of the bill contains by far the most complex, contentious, and speculative elements of this proposed legislation. Member states will have differences of opinion on the mandatory requirements for SNAP E&T based on the fact that under current state options, they run both mandatory and voluntary programs and sometimes a combination of both. They also have the latitude to enforce compliance through sanctions and some do so currently. States also want the flexibility to design programs and interventions according to their labor markets, available employment opportunities, and what interventions in skill development will be most suitable for employers and potential workers. They recognize that employers in their states and communities must increasingly drive appropriate training either on site through apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT) or curriculum development with community colleges and others. What states do not want or need to be effective are highly prescriptive instructions and rigid, administratively cumbersome federal reporting requirements that often measure the wrong performance indicators and divert staff time from focusing on getting people employed. We are sure you will hear from many of our member states individually and carefully weigh their concerns.

Issues in the bill, such as the twenty-hour weekly work requirement, are already in place in many areas and have been the norm for Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDS). The potential transition to 25 hours by 2026 is too far off to predict whether it will be manageable or not and it will be dependent on the state of the economy and SNAP caseload at that time. We also support the concept of important client case management and expanded allowable activities in SNAP E&T, with a particular emphasis on apprenticeships and subsidized (trial) employment. Case management, both at the time of and after job placement, is essential to securing and retaining employment, particularly to work with clients and employers to navigate any issues that arise to jeopardize ongoing employment such as transportation, an ill child, and changes in child care arrangements among others.



The bill also seeks to prevent states from creating artificial catchment areas that appear solely designed to generate waiver eligibility and are geographically complex. However, we urge that you review this provision carefully for the following reasons, including that labor markets are often not county specific but more regional in nature, states may want to waive specific populations like people experiencing homelessness and those on tribal lands, and also consider exemptions for special circumstances such as the closing of a major plant or employer, the unique nature of rural areas, and unexpected natural disasters. These options must still be allowed, rather than assuming that the allowable 15 percent general exemption would be sufficient to address these matters.

There are numerous concerns with the proposed bill including the imposition of unnecessary durational 12 and 36 months sanctions on the adult share of benefits for the first two instances of non-compliance respectively, with the only cure being finding a job or no longer being subject to the work requirement. Clients should at least be able to cure the sanction far sooner by agreeing to comply and enroll in an allowable activity. The mandate that states report monthly is unmanageable and unacceptable. For instance, how would states manage exemptions and other matters if they have to be reviewed monthly? The answer is they will have to spend additional administrative funds of their own beyond what will be made available in the bill. This provision is akin to or worse than the Work Verification Requirement in TANF that is truly onerous and diverts important staff time and funding away from helping clients actually get employed.

Furthermore, we are concerned that legislators have failed to consider a critical factor that impacts the adult subject to the work requirement in families with children: the availability and affordability of child care, including before- and after-school child care, nonstandard hour child care, and drop-in child care. Not only is unsubsidized child care unaffordable for low-wage working families and in short supply in many communities, job opportunities for low-skilled workers are frequently in sectors such as the retail and service industries where employees are expected to work at least some nonstandard hours and irregular schedules with often only a few days' notice. It would be unsound policymaking to expand mandatory work requirements to include parents with children without specifying how these needs can be met.

We see potential room for discussion and compromise as debate goes forward on this bill because we all understand that SNAP is an important nutrition program for families, children, the elderly, disabled individuals, and others during episodic periods of need. SNAP also supports many individuals and families who are already working so great care must be exercised if work requirements are to be expanded to focus SNAP E&T on skill development and job placement rather than potentially becoming a sanction program that will cause many adults, who are trying their best to comply, to lose benefits. Given that, estimates of up to two million current individual SNAP recipients, many of them children, in one million mostly working SNAP households could either lose benefits or eligibility altogether under this bill because of often unwise policy proposals, is disturbing to us.

We hope legislators will rethink some of these provisions going forward in the full House floor debate so together, states and the federal government can truly and effectively expand the benefits of employment to many more work eligible individuals so that they, as individuals and their families, can move toward economic and social mobility as well as eventual self-sufficiency. However, APHSA thinks the rigidity of this seemingly one size fits all structure does not leave states the latitude to implement diverse approaches that respect their individual labor markets and caseload composition.



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Subsection (b) of 4015 makes conforming amendments to section 5(d)(14) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, section 51(d)(8)(A)(ii) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and sections 103(a)(2) and 121(b)(2)(B) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

APHSA Response: We have no issues with these conforming amendments.

Subsection (c) of section 4015 amends section 6(e)(5) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to exclude from the work requirement individuals who are caretakers of a dependent child under 6 years of age or of an incapacitated person. The subsection also strikes section 6(o) pertaining to the current ABAWD time limit and accompanying waivers and exemptions.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports eliminating ABAWD Time Limit regardless if the bill is passed – it is an artificial limit and does not assist in actually helping ABAWDs find work or participate in eligible activities. APHSA also supports the exemption from work requirements of adult work eligible parents in SNAP with a child under age six. We are concerned, however, with the child under age six provision of the bill if the assumption is that care for those age six and over will be fully met by virtue of the child being in school. We urge you to address how child care needs before and after school will be met so that a parent does not have to leave any child unsupervised in order to meet the proposed expanded work hours for work eligible parents participating in SNAP.

As outlined further in our response below in Subsection (f), we have concerns with the age range of 18-59 for exemption from the work requirement. As to the ABAWD Time Limit, it is cumbersome and complex to administer for all states and really has nothing to do with a work requirement. Whatever the ultimate outcome on expanded SNAP E&T in Reauthorization, we do support the concept of one pool of work eligible adults with no distinction between those with or without dependents who do not meet any exemption category in federal law or through state option. As you will see in our comments under Subsection (f) below, we are currently mixed in view as to mandatory versus voluntary work rules and have reservations about the adequacy of funding under this bill.

Subsection (d) of section 4015 makes conforming amendments to Section 6 and 7(i)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

APHSA Response: We have no issues with these conforming amendments.

Subsection (e) of section 4015 amends section 11(e)(19) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to update the information required in the State plan regarding employment and training.

APHSA Response: APHSA recognizes that these conforming amendments do broaden state plan requirements. Currently, SNAP E&T plans basically describe geographic coverage and target populations as well as cost information and the basis of those costs. Under this proposed legislation, plans would have to additionally describe how states will coordinate with WIOA-related activities and how they will meet the new minimum service requirements. While these additions could be a challenge requiring additional time for some states that currently have limited coordination with WIOA, APHSA does not see this as a major concern as long as some flexibility for compliance is allowed.

Subsection (f) of section 4015 amends section 16(h) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to provide \$250,000,000 in fiscal year 2020 and \$1,000,000,000 for each fiscal year thereafter for employment and training programs; adjusts the minimum allocation for each state to not less than \$100,000; and reserves up to \$150,000,000 each year for eligible providers under section 122 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act who provide services for supplemental nutrition assistance program participants to meet work requirements.

APHSAs Response: We appreciate the recognition that in order to achieve any real success in moving individuals into jobs, there must be a significant increase in resources. But depending on the size of the work eligible pool, we are skeptical that even the 100 percent increased SNAP E&T funding to \$1 billion by year three will be sufficient to provide slots to all work eligible SNAP recipients as the bill requires.

The reason for skepticism is that none of us truly know, and only time will tell, how large the pool of work eligible adults will be under this proposed mandatory work program after all exemptions are considered for age, disability, having children under the age of six, and what states will take all or part of the optional 15 percent blanket exemption. There are also two unpredictable variables that could reduce the pool of work eligible adults: 1) some households where adults report zero income may voluntarily leave the program for reasons including potential unreported income or simply not wishing to comply with new proposed rules and 2) the signal effect that stronger work requirements may be on the horizon could prompt others to take a job they might not otherwise have done.

Estimates made by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and deduced from savings in this area noted by the CBO score indicate that as many as 3 million individuals could be work eligible are just that – estimates. While they may prove to be accurate, the figure could be either lower or higher. This uncertainty amplifies risks for states in two ways: 1) that within the proposed funding level, states will fail to reach the requirement that a slot be available for all individuals subject to the work requirement, potentially resulting in sanctions on individuals, even when they are making their best effort to comply and 2) states could potentially face federal penalties themselves for not meeting work requirements, the possibility of which is not addressed in the bill.

The funds broken down on a per work eligible participant may only support very light touch interventions at these levels, not real skilling up for the five million available jobs that Vice-Chair Thompson referenced in his statement on the first day of the House Agriculture Committee markup that took place on April 18, 2018. Beyond the fact that the increased funding by year three of \$1.0 billion is likely not adequate, there are other issues that impede meaningful success including insufficient internal staff capacity in states and localities, expanded administrative costs and too few vendors to contract with to deliver SNAP E&T services, particularly in rural areas.

Some states suggest that the bill, if enacted, be amended to provide additional flexibility for increased funding after year two beyond the \$1 billion proposed in year three. An amendment could include automatic triggers that clearly outline what economic conditions and experiential data from the first two years of the bill would prompt the appropriation of increased funding as well as what programmatic and funding lessons hopefully learned and published by 2020 from the 10 pilot E&T evaluation sites awarded funding in the 2014 Farm Bill should be included in year three and beyond.

Other states believe that the entire work solutions section and funding portions of the legislation are premature and *should be phased in far more slowly than the three-year transition period under the House bill*. This concern stems from the importance of seeing the final evaluation of the 10 pilot projects for SNAP E&T enacted as part of the 2014 Farm Bill. Incorporating lessons learned from both what interventions are most successful and what their cost would be, would provide legislators with a clear line of sight as to what has and has not worked. The point of the 2014 pilot projects was exactly for this purpose: to provide evidence-based policy and practice suggestions that could inform and help bring successful broad SNAP E&T programs to programmatic and cost scale.

At that time, and if the evaluations indicate that resources will be insufficient and that other interventions and activities should be added or adapted, we urge for continued dialogue around amendments that may be potentially based on the same or similar triggers in two ways: 1) to automatically reduce the requirement that slots must be provided for 100 percent of work eligible recipients to a more targeted and lower figure to be determined based on the predicted level of funding shortfall and 2) automatically provide the flexibility in statute to incorporate evidence-based changes in allowable activities and other areas that are recommended by the pilot project evaluation.

Similarly, if the lessons derived from the pilot project evaluation on both costs and practice indicate resources will be insufficient in scale to support the mandatory program and that other interventions and activities should be added or adapted, we urge that the bill be amended based on the same or similar triggers in two ways: 1) to automatically reduce the requirement that slots must be provided for 100 percent of work eligible recipients to a more targeted and lower figure to be determined based on the predicted level of funding shortfall and 2) automatically provide the flexibility in statute to incorporate evidence-based changes in allowable activities and other areas that are recommended by the pilot project evaluation.

Further, we strongly believe that for those individuals age 50 and over, the ability to enter the workforce is far more constrained than for those who are age 18-49, particularly if they have limited or in some cases outdated skills and labor market experience. *This is not at all to say those age 50-59 cannot work due to age but a reality that a mandate for this age group will be very problematic and unlikely to work.* This is a product of the changing economy, employer hesitation in many instances to hire older workers, and rapid advancements in technology with which older individuals may not be as current or adept. We urge legislators, in order to effectively target funding, to reduce the work eligible age range under SNAP E&T to age 18-49 rather than the proposed age 18-59.

We also request further clarification as to how the \$150 million set aside for WIOA out of the \$1 billion funding level in year three was determined prior to taking any position on that provision. We recognize that some SNAP work eligible households could be seeking services through the American Job Centers but would like to know more about the volume of those seeking such services and the current WIOA expenditures for those clients. While the set aside may be appropriate, it could diminish the overall pot of \$1 billion, if indeed the \$150 million is too high for the level of services actually provided to SNAP E&T recipients through the WIOA system.

Subsections (g) and (h) of section 4015 repeals section 16(b) and section 20 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, and makes related conforming amendments.

APHSA Response: APHSA has no issues with these conforming amendments but reserves judgment until we further discuss the implications of these changes that could limit state flexibility as to the eligibility of college students for SNAP, the ability to use short term, constructive work experience programs as an allowable activity, and the general state flexibility on providing exemptions in current law.

Sec. 4016. Modernization of Electronic Benefit Transfer regulations.

Section 4015 amends section 7(h)(2) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to allow for periodic review of EBT regulations taking into account evolving technology, recipient access and ease of use, and alternatives for securing transactions.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports periodic review of EBT regulations but requests clarification as to the meaning of the term “alternatives for securing transactions.”

Sec. 4017. Mobile technologies.

Section 4017 amends section 7(h)(14) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require the availability of use of mobile technologies for the redemption of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits pending the completion of up to five authorized demonstration projects, unless the Secretary makes a determination that implementation requires further study, or is not in the best interest of the supplemental nutrition assistance program. If the Secretary makes such a determination, a report must be submitted to Congress that justifies the finding.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports the creation of five demonstration projects to test the use of mobile technologies for redemption of SNAP benefits as well as providing latitude to the Secretary to determine if further study is needed prior to implementation.

Sec. 4018. Processing fees.

Subsection (a) of section 4018 amends section 7(h)(13) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to affirm that neither a State, nor any agent, contractor, or subcontractor can charge any fee for switching or routing supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports the requirement that no fees can be imposed for switching or routing SNAP benefits.

Subsection (b) of section 4018 makes a conforming amendment to define the term “switching” within section 7(j)(1)(H) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports clarity in language as to the term “switching” in order to comply with the prohibition charging fees.

Sec. 4019. Replacement of EBT cards.

Section 4019 amends section 7(h)(8)(B)(ii) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require the head of household to review program rights and responsibilities after two or more lost cards in a 12-month period.

APHSA Response: APHSA strongly opposes this provision as too limiting, unreasonable, and administratively burdensome. We understand that multiple requests for EBT replacement cards can be a possible warning of potential fraud but that is not always the case – lost cards and requests for replacements occur more frequently among certain populations (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, people with developmental disabilities, those aging out of foster care, and victims of domestic violence) and does not indicate fraud. States agencies through both program and QC/AQI departments quickly review such potential red flags to sort out potential fraud versus human error or circumstances.

The loss of two EBT cards in a year is well within the norms of requests for replacement of lost debit, credit, or other transactional cards from the general population. Requiring heads of SNAP households who have damaged or misplaced more than two EBT cards in a year to review program rights and responsibilities is unnecessary as a floor for requiring the head of household to be called in to review program rights imposes burdensome requirements on both states and clients. We suggest that any trigger of this nature be changed to four or more cards and that a mail notice reviewing rights and responsibilities in SNAP be equally acceptable as a face-to-face counseling meeting. This is yet another large administrative burden on states that already take all avenues to address potential fraud in the use of EBT cards seriously.

Sec. 4020. Benefit recovery.

Section 4019 amends section 7(h)(12) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to adjust benefit storage from six to three months and benefit expungement from 12 to six months, or upon verification that all members of a household are deceased.

APHSA Response: APHSA does not oppose these two provisions. Most SNAP benefits (80 percent or more) are utilized in the first month of issuance and rarely remain after the third month. While these provisions would impact a relatively small group of SNAP participants, states may have to address possible negative impacts on group or congregate homes that transact benefits on behalf of their residents. We do not oppose the expungement of benefits after six months rather than 12. However, we do want to point out that when SNAP benefits are not expended quickly and carry over beyond six or even the current 12-month limit, it is likely that SNAP participants in those households are elderly or disabled and are receiving the minimum 15 dollar monthly benefit. It would be wise to leave the current law in place for these households. Again, states will need transition time to change systems for these shortened timeframes.

Sec. 4021. Requirements for online acceptance of benefits.

Subsection (a) of section 4020 amends section 3(o)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to include online entities within the definition of “retail food store”.

Subsection (b) of section 4020 amends section 7(k) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to strike the required report to Congress, and require the nationwide implementation of the online acceptance of benefits.

APHSA Response: APHSA understands that as technology advances, more participating SNAP retail stores are migrating solely from brick and mortar sites to having the ability to offer online purchase of food items. Some SNAP clients, for various reasons, may find this more convenient. Therefore, we support these provisions as realistic modernizations of existing law.

Sec. 4022. National gateway.

Subsection (a) of Section 4022 amends section 7(d) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to expand the parties for which the Secretary shall implement controls over related to the delivery of benefits. The subsection also adds a section 7(l) to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require the routing of all SNAP transactions through a national gateway for the purposes of transaction validation and settlement, pending completion of a feasibility study; provides funds of \$10,500,000 in fiscal year 2019 and \$9,500,000 in fiscal years 2020 through 2023; requires that the national gateway be sustained through the payment of fees by benefit issuers and third-party processors to the gateway operator, and requires the Secretary to monitor such fees.

Subsection (b) of Section 4022 amends section 9(c) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require retail food stores and wholesale food concerns to submit contracts for electronic benefit transfer services and equipment and records necessary to validate the FNS authorization number.

APHSA Response: While the national gateway seems reasonable to validate SNAP transactions, APHSA cannot take a final position on this without further information as to how it will be built, the benefits of such a system to states, a definition of who are “benefit issuers,” and whether or not states will be charged fees in the future to access information.

Sec. 4023. Access to State systems.

Section 4023 amends sections 11(a)(3)(B) and 16 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require that all State records and the entire information systems in which the records are contained are made available for inspection and audit by the Secretary, subject to security protocols agreed to by the State and the Secretary, for purposes of program oversight.

APHSA Response: APHSA has serious reservations about this provision. While understanding its intent, security protocols themselves are not sufficient. Most states do not have separate record systems for SNAP, but instead have broad systems containing data and personal information for multiple programs (TANF, SNAP, child care, Medicaid, adult services, etc.). Therefore, only onsite supervision of access to data by USDA-FNS or any other federal agency is acceptable to ensure appropriate firewalls and protect privacy by denying access to multiple other program information beyond SNAP. Remote access to state data by FNS, if contemplated, is simply unacceptable to states.

Sec. 4024. Transitional benefits.

Section 4024 amends section 11(s) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by requiring states to offer transitional benefits for households that cease to receive cash assistance, for five months after the date on which cash assistance is terminated.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision so that TANF leavers have time to stabilize economically. Most of our states already exercise the current option to provide transitional SNAP benefits to such households.

Sec. 4025. Incentivizing technology modernization.

Section 4025 amends section 11(t) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to limit grants to funding for simplified supplemental nutrition assistance program application and eligibility determination systems, and to update the allowed types of projects.

Sec. 4026. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit Transfer Transaction Data Report.

Section 4026 amends section 9 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to require the Secretary, not more often than every two years, to collect a sample of retail food store transaction data to be summarized and reported in a manner that prevents identification of individual retail food store chains and SNAP participants.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision to survey and collect retail store food transaction data in SNAP including aggregate SNAP dollars spent, the percent that represents of total store food purchase proceeds, and the types of items purchased while protecting individual store privacy.

Sec. 4027. Adjustment to percentage of recovered funds retained by States.

Section 4027 amends section 16(a) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to increase from 35 to 50 percent the amount of recovered funds States are permitted to retain, and authorizes such funds to be used for supplemental nutrition assistance program investments in technology, improvements in administration and distribution, and actions to prevent fraud.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this modest improvement that could result in some additional funding for thoughtful reinvestments, although the recovery on very small amounts due to the proposed zero-tolerance level (which we oppose below) is negligible at best.

Sec. 4028. Tolerance level for payment errors.

Section 4028 amends section 16(c)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to adjust the tolerance level for payment errors from \$37 to \$0.

APHSA Response: APHSA understands the optics for establishing a zero-error payment tolerance level but cannot support this provision because it is simply unattainable. No program or service we are aware of for any household can reach a zero-error level, or in other words, 100 percent accuracy. The reality is that the provision, if enacted, will significantly increase state administrative costs in order to chase extremely low errors. For example, chasing a 5-dollar overpayment, even if a recovery is made, will cost more administratively than the dollars recovered. Recognition that payment errors occur often due to the complexity of the program and timeliness requirements for application processing was the motivation for establishing a reasonable level of tolerance in SNAP payments in the first place. Also, due to the currently mandated two-step QC review process (categories I and II), many of these low variances have not been established as actual overpayments.

Washington State, one of APHSA’s members, recently conducted a study on the impact of moving to a zero-tolerance level had it been in effect in 2017. Their findings bolster the claim that this provision will result in very little additional dollars refunded to the program but cost exponentially more in administrative staff time required to review the additional cases. It reviewed cases with a total allotment of \$212,613. When evaluating figures, had the zero-tolerance level been in effect at that time, 193 additional cases would require full staff review but would yield only \$2,932 – far less than the cost to review them. New York State, another APHSA member, conducted a similar analysis and found the results to also be minimal in comparison to cost. The error tolerance threshold that was already reduced from \$50 to \$37 through previous action is sufficient to protect program integrity and should remain at \$37 rather than be lowered to zero.

Sec. 4029. State performance indicators.

Section 4029 amends section 16(d) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to repeal bonuses for States that demonstrate high or most improved performances for fiscal year 2018 and each fiscal year thereafter, while retaining requirements regarding performance criteria including actions taken to correct payment errors, reduce error rates, and improve eligibility determinations.

APHSA Response: APHSA understands that performance bonuses for payment accuracy might have led to attempts by a small number of states to put in place mechanisms through a private vendor that circumvented good practices in order to place them in a position to receive a bonus but they were a distinct minority. Rather than eliminate all performance bonuses as a result, APHSA suggests that the Secretary review what areas of accomplishment that currently are eligible for bonus payments exist and should be retained, such as timely application processing, and what other priority performance areas might be added for bonus payments, such as reducing food insecurity year-to-year and operating an effective SNAP E&T program that has demonstrably led to job placements.

Sec. 4030. Public-private partnerships.

Section 4030 amends Section 17 of the Food and Nutrition Act by permitting not more than 10 pilot projects to support public-private partnerships that address food insecurity and poverty. The section authorizes appropriations of \$5,000,000 to carry out the projects, to remain available until expended.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports public-private partnership pilots in communities aimed at reducing food insecurity and ameliorating poverty through innovative approaches that improve program coordination and assist families to be economically mobile and move towards independence. This was also a suggestion of the National Commission on Hunger in their 2016 report, *Freedom from Hunger*.

Sec. 4031. Authorization of appropriations.

Section 4031 amends section 18(a)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to extend the authorization of appropriations through 2023.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports extending appropriations.

Sec. 4032. Emergency food assistance.

Section 4032 amends section 27(a) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to provide \$60,000,000 in funding for fiscal years 2019 through 2023, and to establish a Farm-to-Food-Bank fund through which \$20,000,000 of the funds made available in the section are distributed to States to be used to procure, or to enter into agreements with food banks to procure excess fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the State or surrounding region to be provided to eligible recipient agencies under Section 201A(3) of the Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983.

APHSAs Response: APHSAs supports this provision in principle but reserves comment.

Sec. 4033. Nutrition education.

Subsection (a) of section 4033 amends section 28 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to define 1862 and 1890 institutions as eligible institutions for purposes of carrying out the program; directs the Secretary, acting through the Administrator of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, in consultation with the Administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service, to implement the program; requires eligible institutions to the extent practicable, to provide for the employment and training of professional and paraprofessional aides from the target population to engage in direct nutrition education, and to partner with other public and private entities as appropriate to optimize program delivery; increases mandatory funding for the program to \$485,000,000 beginning in fiscal year 2019; authorizes additional appropriations for the program of \$65,000,00 for fiscal years 2019 through 2023; updates the allocation of funds so that, beginning in fiscal year 2019, funds are allocated based solely on States' SNAP populations; and limits administrative costs for eligible institutions to 10 percent.

Subsection (b) of section 4033 amends section 18(a)(3)(A)(ii) to reflect the repeal of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program by section 7110 of this Act.

APHSAs Response: At this time, APHSAs reserves full comment on these two subsections until further study but we have two strong initial reactions:

We do agree that SNAP Nutrition Education Programs, given the significant investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, must be far more rigorously evaluated to demonstrate if they have any real and enduring benefit for SNAP recipients regarding healthy food purchasing choices, food preparation, and health outcomes. Those components that prove valuable should be retained and the funding for other components that do not should be reinvested in direct SNAP benefits such as expanded child care, shelter, and other deductions and pilot programs to test an enhanced basis for the determination of household SNAP allotments.

Our additional concern is that all the funding would now go to Land-Grant Universities (LGUs) rather than to states that can and often provide subcontracts to LGU's. This change is highly troublesome as it removes state flexibility over curriculum or program design as well as having to still be accountable for managing the program. The requirements that LGU's and other contractors actually serve primarily the SNAP population, which they often do not without specificity in state subcontract requirements with the state, will be lost. Free license to LGU's to receive all funding is not a good idea.

Sec. 4034. Retail food store and recipient trafficking.

Section 4034 amends section 29(c)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to extend funding through 2023.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision.

Sec. 4035. Technical corrections.

Section 4035 makes technical corrections to sections 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 17, 25, and 26 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

Sec. 4036. Implementation funds.

Section 4036 provides, out of any funds made available under section 18(a) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 for fiscal year 2019, \$150,000,000, to remain available until expended to be used by the Secretary in carrying out the amendments made by Subtitle A.

SUBTITLE B—COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS

Sec. 4041. Commodity Distribution Program.

Section 4041 amends section 4(a) of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 to extend the authority for the Secretary to purchase and distribute agricultural commodities through 2023.

Sec. 4042. Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Section 4042 amends section 5 of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 to provide funding to allow the Secretary to continue to carry out the Commodity Supplemental Food Program through 2023.

Sec. 4043. Distribution of surplus commodities to special nutrition projects.

Section 4043 amends section 1114(a)(2)(A) of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 to reauthorize the program through 2023.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports the extension and operation of the CSF Program through 2023.

SUBTITLE C—MISCELLANEOUS

Sec. 4601. Purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables for distribution to schools and service institutions.

Section 4601 amends section 10603(b) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 to extend funding through 2023.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision.

Sec. 4602. Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Section 4602 amends section 4402(a) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 to extend funding through 2023.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision.

Sec. 4603. Healthy Food Financing Initiative.

Section 4603 amends section 243(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to extend the existing authorization of appropriations until October 1, 2023

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision.

Sec. 4604. Amendments to the Fruit and Vegetable School Lunch Program.

Section 4604 amends Section 19 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to provide grants for providing fresh, canned, frozen, and pureed fruits and vegetables in elementary schools.

APHSA Response: APHSA supports this provision.

Additional Amendments – Two recommendations that were in our SNAP Reauthorization paper² will likely be introduced as floor amendments during debate on the bill.

They include:

- 1) An amendment to allow states, solely at their option, to contract out all administrative functions to non-government private vendors and/or individuals such as former staff in SNAP, including certification and eligibility, similar to what is already allowed in Medicaid and CHIP. For various reasons, our states will either desire to exercise such an option or decline the opportunity. Therefore, our support for this provision was clearly stated in our Reauthorization paper as a state option and not a requirement.**
- 2) APHSA recommended that pilot projects be established and evaluated to prohibit the use of SNAP benefits to purchase a defined set of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) because the public health consequences of consuming such products is a major contributor to obesity, the onset of diabetes (particularly among youth), and other chronic illness. Pilot projects would evaluate whether such a prohibition has positive impacts on food purchasing by changing habits and thereby improving health outcomes or if households simply substituted their own funds to continue to purchase SSBs. We understand that an amendment to prohibit such purchases with SNAP funds will be introduced during the floor debate on the bill and our support would extend only to establishing pilot programs and not an overall prohibition.**

² See APHSA's policy recommendations in *The Future of SNAP – A Modern and Responsive System*, available at <https://aphsa.org/CEEWB/default.aspx>.



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