

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

May 16, 2018

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: **NHLA Opposition to H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (House Farm Bill)**

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of the nation's 46 leading Latino nonpartisan advocacy organizations, to express our strong opposition to H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (House Farm Bill), that was reported by the House Committee on Agriculture. The House Farm Bill's provisions related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), pesticides, and conservation programs would be detrimental to Latino and other communities across the United States. **NHLA will closely monitor any votes on this or related legislation for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community.**

The House Farm Bill includes sweeping changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that would be devastating to Latinos, farmworkers and other low-income rural and urban communities. SNAP is our nation's most effective anti-hunger program, helping millions of Americans, including Latinos, put food on the table and make ends meet. More than 40 million Americans, including 10 million low-income Latinos, utilize SNAP in a typical month. Nineteen percent of households headed by Latinos were food insecure in 2016. Among Latino households with children, the rate was 22 percent. In addition to filling critical gaps in hunger, SNAP is a powerful tool to combat poverty. SNAP lifted at least 1.2 million Latinos out of poverty in 2015, and some studies estimate the impact was as high 2.5 million.

The House Farm Bill would make it more difficult for these vulnerable families to put food on the table by taking away or cutting SNAP benefits. The House Farm Bill would drastically cut SNAP funding, fundamentally restructure SNAP by ending categorical eligibility and shifting funds from benefits to untested work programs, erect barriers to participation through burdensome paperwork and reporting requirements, and waste taxpayer dollars on creating a larger bureaucracy to administer the new SNAP program.

The House Farm Bill's unrealistic work requirements would punish many low-income Latinos who are actually working. Latinos' workforce participation rate of 66.2 percent exceeds the national average of 63 percent. However, since Latinos are overrepresented in low-wage jobs, they often have unpredictable

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
GreenLatinos
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Hispanics in Philanthropy
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Mi Familia Vota
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation
Voto Latino

hours or wages, lack employer-sponsored benefits, and are engaged in seasonal or part-time work. The volatility of low-wage work includes weekly and monthly fluctuations in work hours and wages that can mean the difference between eligibility and ineligibility. Verifying employment is already burdensome for Latino and other low-wage workers and many enrolled in SNAP report difficulty documenting hours, which can lead to families wrongly losing benefits. Additional documentation and reporting requirements will only exacerbate this challenge facing struggling families.

The House Farm Bill's changes to SNAP would have a particular impact on children. Children who receive SNAP do better in school and in life: SNAP participation can lead to improvements in reading and math among elementary children and increases chances of high school graduation. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the majority of adults who would lose benefits due to work requirements would be those in households with children, and most of the households that would lose benefits due to the "benefit cliff" would be working families with children. Eliminating "categorical eligibility" would sever the relationship between SNAP participation and free school meal eligibility, putting children in a more precarious position.

In addition to the changes to SNAP, the House Farm Bill contains provisions that would endanger the health and environment of farmworkers and other rural residents. Many provisions encourage excessive pesticide use without ensuring effective protections from exposure for workers and their families. In contrast, there is bipartisan legislation, the "Pesticide Registration Enhancement Act" (PRIA 4), that would provide funding to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the processing of pesticide approval applications, combined with measures to ensure safety for farmworkers. The House Farm Bill, however, contains a flawed version of PRIA 4.

The House Farm Bill also includes funding for agriculture groups to expand Associated Health Plans (AHPs), which would expand enrollment in AHPs and further destabilize the health insurance marketplace. Health insurance coverage provided by AHPs often do not include Essential Health Benefits, maternity care, or critical cervical cancer screenings. Essential Health Benefits are both critical for coverage to access care when a person needs it, and also help to reduce health disparities for communities of color. While AHPs offer cheaper plans, they also offer less coverage, leaving enrollees without the coverage they actually need, and they reduce the pool of those insured in health insurance marketplaces, leading to higher premiums for others.

Furthermore, the Forestry Title of the House Farm Bill launches an outrageous attack on responsible forest management decision-making, including a clear disregard for the public protections provided under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA provides the public with the information, analysis, and forum to ensure that public lands are managed in the public's interest. Currently, the bill prioritizes the logging industry over all other stakeholders. It would cause irreparable harm to our federal forests, the communities and millions of Americans who depend on them for clean drinking water, subsistence, recreation, employment and economic benefits.

In short, the House Farm Bill would undermine the health and well-being of millions of Americans, including Latinos, and result in increased hunger, exposure to toxins, and hardship.

We therefore urge you to vote against passage of the House Farm Bill (H.R. 2). Congress should instead work in a bipartisan manner to enact a Farm Bill that combats hunger and makes farmlands safer places to work and live.

Please contact NHLA through Laura Esquivel, of Hispanic Federation, at lesquivel@hispanicfederation.org, or Virginia Ruiz, of Farmworker Justice, at vruiiz@farmworkerjustice.org, with any questions regarding this issue. Thank you for your consideration of these critical issues facing Latino families.

Sincerely,



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