



September 23, 2019

SNAP Program Design Branch  
Program Development Division  
Food and Nutrition Service  
3101 Park Center Drive  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Alexandria, VA 22302

**Re: Notice of Proposed Rule Making -- Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) RIN 0584-AE62**

Dear SNAP Program Design Branch:

The National Association of County Human Services Administrators (NACHSA) opposes the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposed rule to revise categorical eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

NACHSA is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and represents county directors of human services programs nationwide. In ten states, NACHSA members administer SNAP on behalf of the state. Nearly one-third of all SNAP recipients reside in those states.

Since the option became available in 1996 through the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act*, all state-supervised, county administered states use Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) to ensure as many families and individuals as possible receive nutritional support through SNAP. Additionally, counties reduce their administrative costs by streamlining eligibility determinations afforded by BBCE. County-administered states are among the over 40 states and territories employing the option over the past two decades.

BBCE supports counties' efforts in reducing food insecurity. County human services departments work to ensure that individuals and families in their communities receive the necessary supports for which they are eligible in order to provide some modicum of financial stability and help them become self-sufficient. BBCE helps working families avoid the so-called "benefit cliff," since states are able to raise SNAP's eligibility

threshold above 130 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) – allowing a more gradual phase-down of benefits which incentivizes continued work. Working families also benefit from BBCE in those states that have adopted the option to raise the \$2,250 asset limit for households (\$3,500 for households with a person who is elderly or disabled). Increasing or eliminating the asset limit gives families some ability to plan and save for the future.

Under the proposed rule, USDA estimates that more than 3 million individuals would lose SNAP benefits, the majority who live in working families already struggling to meet their basic needs. Those individuals will likely turn to our communities' food banks and county programs for assistance. An additional 500,000 children are likely to lose eligibility for free school meals, given the interaction of BBCE and those programs through a direct certification process that relieves the family from having to complete a separate application. The Urban Institute estimates that nine percent of the nation's 21.5 million households would lose all SNAP benefits under the rule. That includes eight percent of the nation's 43.5 million individuals who depend on the program during times of economic distress. By USDA's own estimates, the proposed rule would remove \$10.5 billion of nutrition supports over five years, while increasing SNAP federal administrative costs by \$2.3 billion. State and county administrative cost will also increase commensurately.

Many working families experiencing poverty endure high levels of financial strain due to high costs of living, including the high housing and child care costs. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' analysis of fiscal year 2017 SNAP characteristics data suggests that over 90 percent of benefits resulting from BBCE go to households who pay over half their income toward rent and utilities. Without BBCE, a working family earning over SNAP's federal 130 percent of poverty gross income limit will be unable to meet basic needs, including paying for housing and child care.

Our counties have operated under well-established BBCE rules for many years. This proposed rule would require significant program re-design requiring extensive time and effort to modify state policies and system automation updates and training of staff to implement the changes. Timely application and recertification measures will be affected, given county eligibility staffs' efforts to work with SNAP applicants to collect the proper documents to verify income.

NACHSA strongly opposes any administrative action by USDA to reduce states' flexibility to extend SNAP eligibility to low-wage working households and urges USDA to withdraw the proposed rule. Instead, USDA should encourage the remaining states to adopt categorical eligibility. Extending SNAP's ability to provide food assistance to working households in low-wage jobs is a powerful policy tool that reduces food insecurity and promotes savings necessary for long-term economic security among people with low-incomes.

Thank you for your attention to our views. Should you have any questions, please contact Tom Joseph, NACHSA Washington Representative at [tj@paragonlobbying.com](mailto:tj@paragonlobbying.com) or 202.898.1446.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathy Senderling-McDonald". The signature is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Cathy Senderling McDonald  
President, NACHSA  
Deputy Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association