

HEIDI HEITKAMP

NORTH DAKOTA

HART SENATE BUILDING 516
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
PH: 202-224-2043
FAX: 202-224-7776
TOLL FREE: 1-800-223-4457

<http://www.heitkamp.senate.gov>

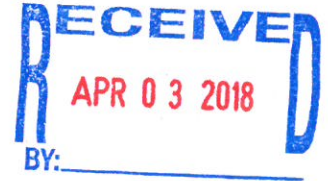
United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3407

March 12, 2018

COMMITTEES:

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Mr. Scott Fry
 The North Dakota Economic Security and Prosperity Alliance
 1003 East Interstate Avenue, Suite 7
 Bismarck, ND 58503-0500

Dear Scott,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It was good to hear from you.

Recently, I received a petition that you signed highlighting the important role SNAP plays in helping feed at-risk populations. Our nation is one of the most prosperous countries in the world, yet, despite our great wealth, more than one out of every seven Americans lives below the poverty line, and SNAP provides an important food safety net for these food insecure families. In 2016, there were more than 54,000 North Dakota residents who participated in SNAP. Nearly 73 percent of them were families with children, and approximately 33 percent had family members who are elderly or have disabilities. In North Dakota and across America, SNAP participation levels have continued to fall and are currently at their lowest point since 2010. The Congressional Budget Office expects SNAP participation and costs to continue to fall in the coming years. I believe it is important we maintain a sensible food safety net to help North Dakota's food insecure families weather an economic crisis.

Specifically, the president's fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget proposes a number of changes to SNAP, which would cut more than \$213.5 billion from the program over the next 10 years. Most notably, the proposed "Harvest Box" would reduce SNAP expenditures by \$131.7 billion over a decade. The Harvest Box concept would provide SNAP eligible households with a government-purchased, non-perishable food box in lieu of food that households would otherwise purchase at the grocery store. This proposal is seriously concerning to me as it would restrict access to fresh fruits and vegetables and may be difficult to implement for individuals with special dietary needs or food allergies. Equally concerning is how this proposal would impact main street and local grocery stores, which are already struggling to survive and operate on slim profit margins. Access to food is already a challenge for many rural communities and would grow worse if SNAP households were no longer shopping in their local community.

In the Senate, I have consistently voted to ensure that working families can obtain a living wage, afford to keep a roof over their heads, put food on their tables, and access the medical care they need. In debating the 2014 Farm Bill, which reauthorized SNAP, we faced a number of challenges including a set of proposals passed by the House of Representatives that would have significantly jeopardized SNAP by cutting \$40 billion from the program. These cuts would have eliminated food assistance for as many as four million low-income Americans. I am pleased that

BISMARCK OFFICE:
 228 FEDERAL BUILDING
 220 EAST ROSSER AVENUE
 BISMARCK, ND 58501
 PH: 701-258-4648
 FAX: 701-258-1254

DICKINSON OFFICE:
 40 1ST AVENUE WEST
 SUITE 202
 DICKINSON, ND 58601
 PH: 701-225-0974
 FAX: 701-225-3287

FARGO OFFICE:
 306 FEDERAL BUILDING
 657 SECOND AVENUE NORTH
 FARGO, ND 58102
 PH: 701-232-8030 - 1-800-223-4457
 FAX: 701-232-6449

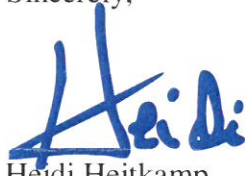
GRAND FORKS OFFICE:
 33 S. 3RD ST., SUITE B
 GRAND FORKS, ND 58201
 PH: 701-775-9601
 FAX: 701-746-1990

MINOT OFFICE:
 105 FEDERAL BUILDING
 100 FIRST STREET S.W.
 MINOT, ND 58701
 PH: 701-852-0703
 FAX: 701-838-8196

none of the overreaching SNAP cuts passed by the House were included in the final Farm Bill. Ultimately, it is the job of Congress to set spending priorities and fund the government. As Congress begins the FY 2019 appropriations process and considers the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, it is important we continue to provide a sensible food safety net to help North Dakota's food insecure families.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any additional concerns in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heidi". The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'H' and a cursive 'Heidi'.

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate

HH:wjlw