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U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley
U.S. Representative Seth Moulton
U.S. Representative Jake Auchincloss

March 6, 2025

Dear Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of public health experts, medical professionals, and medical institutions, we thank you for your continued support for federal nutrition programs, especially the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other vital supports including Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

As Congress considers budget proposals with significant cuts and restrictions to our nation's safety net, including SNAP and child nutrition programs, Medicaid, and TANF, we want to express our deep concern about the harmful impact these changes will have on the health and well-being of our nation. These cuts will be especially devastating for those least able to buffer themselves – among them, households with low incomes, older adults, children, and people with disabilities. **We write to you to ask you to work with your colleagues to protect SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, and other critical safety net programs from devastating cuts and restrictions.**

SNAP is the nation's number one defense against hunger and food insecurity, which are major drivers of poor health throughout the lifespan.ⁱ In Massachusetts, 1 in 6 residents benefit from the critical support supplied by SNAP.ⁱⁱ In December 2024, 27 percent of participating households had at least one child.ⁱⁱ SNAP provides these households the ability to put food on their table and have the nutrition needed to grow and thrive. Nearly three-quarters of adults who participate in SNAP are low-wage workers, and close to two-thirds of SNAP participants are children, elderly, or disabled. For families with low and inconsistent wages, SNAP helps to supplement budgets and keeps food on the table without sacrificing other basic needs, including rent, utilities, child care, and health care.ⁱⁱⁱ

As health experts we want to highlight that decades of research shows that SNAP is effective in reducing food insecurity, improving health, reducing health care costs, and supporting educational success. Policies that deprive children, families, older adults, and individuals of adequate SNAP benefits damage the health of our community members' bodies and brains.

Research from Children's HealthWatch and other researchers has shown that a strong SNAP program does the following:

- **Improve child health:** Young children in families participating in SNAP are healthier, grow better, and are more likely to develop well emotionally and academically for their age compared

to their peers in likely eligible families not participating in the program.^{iv} SNAP's role in supporting child health begins even before birth. Research has shown that babies whose mothers participated in SNAP during pregnancy were less likely to be born at a low birth weight – a birth outcome that contributes to a range of poor health outcomes.^v

- **Improve caregiver health:** Children need healthy families to thrive. Adults participating in SNAP have reported better mental health, and SNAP participation has been associated with lower risk of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension among adults who participated in the program during early childhood.^{vi,vii}
- **Increase food security for families and children:** Caregivers often try to protect children from hunger by forgoing meals themselves. Compared to families who are likely eligible, but not participating in SNAP, families with young children participating in SNAP are 22 percent more likely to be able to afford enough food for all members. Additionally, they are 33 percent more likely to have enough resources to protect children from having the size of meals cut.^{viii} Conversely, families whose SNAP benefits are terminated or reduced have significantly increased odds of household and child food insecurity, compared to families with consistent participation in SNAP.^{ix}
- **Reduces health care costs for children and adults:** Food insecurity is linked to avoidable societal and individual health care expenditures.^x Children in families that struggle to afford food have higher health care utilization and costs.^{xi} Food insecurity was conservatively estimated in 2014 (which remains the most current estimate available) to cost the US economy more than \$160 billion in excess healthcare costs annually.^{xii} Children's HealthWatch also estimated the health-related costs attributable to food insecurity in Massachusetts to be more than \$2.4 billion in 2016.^{xiii} Research shows that SNAP enrollment is associated with reduced health care spending among adults with low incomes.^{xiv}
- **Alleviate economic hardships:** Working in tandem with other programs to preserve family health, SNAP has a positive ripple effect. Families participating in SNAP are 28 percent more likely to be able to pay for medical expenses without foregoing basic necessities like food, rent and utilities.^{ix}

Proposals to reduce SNAP benefits and implement further eligibility restrictions threaten the program's effectiveness, will harm the health and well-being of children and families, and likely increase health care costs. These changes – as well as those proposed to Medicaid and TANF – may also result in families losing eligibility for other critical services that support food security and health, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), free or reduced-price meals, utility assistance, and child care assistance.

As health professionals and experts, we urge the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation to actively seek bi-partisan solutions to ensure SNAP is fully funded, and to defend SNAP and other safety net programs from devastating cuts or policy changes. The future of our nation, economy, and local communities depends on the healthy growth and development of our nation's children - our future community leaders and workforce - and the health and stability of our caregivers and workers. Ensuring that our safety net remains strong is critically important for the health of every community nationwide.

Sincerely,

Bay State Birth Coalition
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
Boston Medical Center Health System
Cambridge Health Alliance
Children's HealthWatch
Codman Square Health Center
Community Care Cooperative (C3)
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals
Health Care For All
Health Leads
Legal Key Partnership for Health and Justice
Lynn Community Health Center
Mass General Brigham
Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians
Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
Massachusetts Medical Society
Massachusetts Public Health Alliance
National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts Chapter
The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health
The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
The TEAM UP Scaling and Sustainability Center

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