



February 13, 2023

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
419 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Sen. John Boozman, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stabenow and Boozman,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to urge your committee to resist adding any work requirements for SNAP recipients or make any funding reductions to the program.

Children, and their families, who have access to healthy food options are more likely to engage in play and other outdoor recreational activities that can have a profound impact on their mental health outcomes and academic performance. However, when children do not have access to the nutritional support they need the consequences can be quite severe. Not only do they suffer from the well-documented effects of malnutrition but also from social isolation, decreased physical development, and greater susceptibility to other nutritionally-related diseases which stem from lower-levels of physical activity.

Erecting any sort of barrier to a child's ability to access SNAP benefits imposes significant risk to their future health and learning potential. Therefore, any possible downside fiscal risk is dwarfed by the possible upside economic benefits that come with ensuring children have easy access to the appropriate levels of nutritional support needed to perform well in school, engage in active play, and live a healthier life.

KABOOM! is a national non-profit organization dedicated to ending playspace inequity across the country. We work in every type of community and see the link between good nutrition and healthy physical activity every time we engage with young people when they help design and build the new playground their school or neighborhood is receiving.

Because of KABOOM!'s work with primarily low-income communities we witness how even small changes to a family's food budget can have a profound effect on their overall physical and mental health. Even a relatively modest subtraction to the nutritional levels caregivers are able to provide their children—and themselves—can lead to long-term and persistent declines in physical and cognitive abilities. Even maintaining SNAP at its current funding level will be insufficient to meet a child's needs due to the rising cost of food. That is why any cut from the current level could be potentially devastating for millions of children.

KABOOM! believes in the transformative power of play, however, play is only possible when children's other basic needs are being met. I hope your committee will continue its historic support for SNAP and maintain its defense of the idea that in the richest country on earth, no child should ever face the challenges of hunger or lack of nutritional support.

Thank you for your support of children and their families' needs and for the consideration of my comments. If your office has any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Sincerely,


Lysa Ratliff
CEO