



May 16, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 131,400 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), I am writing to express concerns about the Farm Bill, the *Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018* (HR 2).

The AAFP is deeply concerned that HR 2 authorizes \$65 million to establish a loan and grant program to create agricultural association health plans (AHPs) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The AAFP has been consistent in our stance that while competition is important and serves as a tool to increase the availability and affordability of services, it should never come at the expense of meaningful insurance coverage.

We are also concerned that the bill's proposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) could exacerbate food insecurity. Food insecurity is defined by USDA as "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways." The USDA estimates that there are currently 41.2 million individuals living in food insecure households, including 13 million children and 5.4 million seniors.¹ A 2015 *Health Affairs* article reported that individuals experience physical, health, and psychological conditions associated with lack of access to food.² Evidence continues to mount that lack of access to healthy food can adversely impact an individuals' ability to follow treatment plans and result in medication non-adherence. We believe these cuts would result in higher chronic disease rates that would further burden U.S. public health systems and result in higher medical costs.

We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this important bill and urge support for programs that help promote health, food access, and nutrition education. For more information, please contact Sonya Clay, Government Relations Representative, at 202-232-9033 or sclay@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

John Meigs, Jr., MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

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¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Food Security Status, 2016,
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>

² Health Affairs, Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes, November 2015,
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0645>