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CONGRESS FAILED IN PROTECTING WORKING FAMILIES

Northwest Harvest's response to cuts in SNAP which helps feed those who suffer from hunger.

(Seattle, WA – June 22, 2018) Yesterday, 213 Congressional members, *including four from Washington state*, voted for and passed a harsh and unworkable Farm Bill that takes food off the tables of at least 2 million struggling Americans. The House Farm Bill cuts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps) by nearly \$19 billion, threatening the health and safety of our communities by further deepening hunger and poverty.

SNAP helps nearly 1 million Washingtonians buy the nutritious food they need to focus on learning in school, to be healthy, and to best find and keep jobs. SNAP is a lifeline for struggling families with children, seniors, people with disabilities, military veterans, and low wage workers.

The SNAP changes in the House Farm Bill impact every category of SNAP recipient, but here in Washington, working families with children and people living in our rural communities are hit the hardest. One of these changes—the elimination of Categorical Eligibility, which has been used to great effect in our state to help more working, SNAP-eligible families access the program—will eliminate food assistance for 60,000 Washingtonians. The bill also aggressively expands work requirements while making it harder for the state to waive penalties in areas of high unemployment. This means that even in our rural and coastal towns where most of the jobs are in the agriculture and tourism industries, older workers up to the age of 60 and parents of children as young as 6, could be at risk of losing SNAP for a whole year when jobs are not available year-round.

The House Farm Bill is a betrayal of Washington's and our nation's long standing, bipartisan commitment to ensuring that struggling individuals have enough to eat. The bill also betrays our small, family-owned farms that make up most of Washington's 35,000 farms. It eliminates the Conservation Stewardship Program and key marketing promotion and trade enhancement programs that help sustain small and mid-scale growers.

In stark contrast to the House Farm Bill is a well-crafted, bipartisan Farm Bill that the Senate will consider next week. That bill provides strong investments in employment and training opportunities to move people off of SNAP and into good paying jobs, and it provides much needed increases to programs that help family farms expand and diversify their marketing and trade opportunities. It manages to make these important investments for both struggling families and farms – *without touching SNAP*.

The Washington families left behind by our economy and the Washington farmers that face great uncertainty from ongoing trade disputes need a Farm Bill, but passage of the highly partisan House bill now makes negotiations with the Senate more difficult. **We strongly urge Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler, Rep. Dan Newhouse, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, and Rep. Dave Reichert to make amends to the constituents they serve: abandon this partisan path and support efforts in the House to adopt the bipartisan, Senate Farm Bill so that all Washingtonians can exercise their right to access nutritious food.**

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About Northwest Harvest

Northwest Harvest is Washington's leading hunger relief agency – supporting a statewide network of 375 food banks, meal programs, and high-need schools. Focused on improving equity in our food system, Northwest Harvest believes everyone in Washington should have consistent access to nutritious food that feeds the body, mind, and spirit. In addition to making sure those who suffer from hunger are being fed, Northwest Harvest aims to shift public opinion, as well as impact institutional policies and societal practices that perpetuate hunger, poverty, and disparities in our state.