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UCOWF Statement on USDA's Proposed SNAP Anti-Fraud Efforts

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Following yesterday's reports that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to propose changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards, the United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF) issued the following statement.

"The smart chip technology has been available for nearly 30 years, and advancing this technology into the nation's largest food support program is long overdue," said Keith Miskie, President of UCOWF. "So, we applaud Secretary of Agriculture Rollins for addressing this need by applying existing, proven solutions at scale to protect SNAP."

Continuing, Miskie added, "However, no one should fool themselves into thinking that simply adding chips to EBT cards is a 'silver bullet' resolving the program's shortfalls." "Specifically, this change would not address common SNAP fraudster activities, including eligibility, online transactions, preventing unauthorized retailers, unauthorized reprogramming, account takeovers or even 'card not present' transactions. So, while a positive step, it is clearly not THE solution."

Further, again based on press reports, the planned regulation would require states to issue new chipped SNAP EBT cards within two years. Yet this change would be on top of the H.R. 1 changes reducing states' federal support of SNAP administration to 25% as of October 1st, leaving states to fund 75% of this transition.

"While well intentioned, states already dramatically underfund FWA efforts, and layering on an unfunded mandate of this magnitude won't help" explained Miskie. "In fact, California already transitioned its SNAP program to chipped cards at a cost of \$100 million, but that was split 50-50 with the federal government. So, USDA really needs to stop and think before putting this type of burden on the states. In the meantime, UCOWF applauds Secretary Rollins on her proposal, and the nation's fraud investigators stand ready to work with her to accomplish our shared goals of protecting beneficiaries and reducing fraud."

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UCOWF is the only national professional organization solely dedicated to the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution, and recovery of fraud in public assistance programs. Our members are the boots on the ground in states, counties, territories, and federal agencies. They see where the systems fail, how fraudsters exploit those failures, and how federal policy can either help or hinder a successful investigation. (www.ucowf.net)

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