



September 8, 2025

<Sent via e-mail>

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: Exploring State Options in SNAP Hearing**

Dear Chair Thompson and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture,

The United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF), a national organization dedicated to promoting integrity and accountability in public assistance programs, writes to express serious concerns regarding certain State options and waivers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that undermine program integrity. While we unequivocally support SNAP's critical role in addressing hunger and supplementing nutrition in our nation, we believe specific State practices increase the risk of errors, fraud, and misallocation of benefits, straining resources intended for our nation's most vulnerable households.

Our concerns focus on the following State options and waivers, which, while intended to streamline program administration and enhance access to the program, can inadvertently compromise program oversight:

1. **Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE):** Much has rightfully been written about this controversial state option.<sup>1</sup> What once was a well-intentioned option for States to administer public assistance programs effectively and efficiently has been twisted into an intentional expansion of public assistance rolls without regard to program integrity or increased costs to the federal government.

BBCE was introduced in 2000 through regulatory changes, allowing states to confer categorical eligibility for SNAP based on TANF funded benefits and services. In 2019, the Trump Administration proposed a Rule to restrict BBCE, aiming to tighten eligibility criteria and reduce the rampant expansion of the SNAP program while restoring the eligibility requirement of asset limits ("means testing").

This loophole results in millions of normally ineligible households becoming dependent on the government with the increased dependency on self-attestation and the willful disregard of income and asset verifications. Congress should eliminate BBCE in its current configuration and restore public confidence in the government's ability to provide services.

2. **Simplified Reporting and Extended Certification Periods:** While simplified reporting and longer certification periods (e.g., up to 36 months for Elderly Simplified Application

<sup>1</sup> See State Policy Network, "'Waivers Gone Wild' reports lead to federal action on waiver abuse," <https://spn.org/waivers-gone-wild-reports-lead-to-federal-action-on-waiver-abuse/>, and American Enterprise Institute, "A Reform Framework for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/a-reform-framework-for-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program/>

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Project, and 29 States with expanded periods up to 24 months) can reduce administrative and applicant burdens, they delay detection of changes in household circumstances, contributing to massive waste and overpayments.<sup>2</sup> In 2024, SNAPs national overpayment error rate reached 9.26%, partly due to outdated household information under these policies.<sup>3</sup>

3. **Self-Attestation:** States get to decide which eligibility factors they will accept from an applicant without additional verification. The over-reliance and use of the “honor system” has been a major contributory factor in fraud, waste, and abuse in the SNAP program. The reliance on self-reported eligibility information with delayed or minimal verifications, increases the risk of inaccurate reporting or intentional misrepresentation, leading to improper eligibility determinations. UCOWF testified to this issue at the February 12, 2025, House DOGE Subcommittee hearing, “The War on Waste: Stamping out the Scourge of Improper Payments and Fraud.”<sup>4</sup>
  
4. **Disaster SNAP Flexibilities:** Expedited processing during disasters is essential and can be achieved effectively through automated verifications. However, states operate the program under such broad waiver and option authority that program integrity is often severely compromised. This framework has not been updated by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) since 2014 and served as the precursor to the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC) project, which was tested and independently reported to Congress, ultimately leading to the 2018 Farm Bill's mandate for a national rollout. Despite this, no meaningful reforms to D-SNAP have been implemented following Hurricane Katrina or the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the previous administration disregarded this Committee's instructions for the NAC rollout by deploying an untested and defective solution that fails to even address D-SNAP and dual participation - the core purpose of the initiative. Congress should impose strict oversight on D-SNAP approvals and waivers, while mandating that USDA adhere to the 2018 Farm Bill's legislative directives regarding dual participation in D-SNAP (via the NAC) and issue an updated guidance document clarifying available options and waivers for states.

These practices, while simplifying program administration, contribute to SNAP’s error rates and potential fraud, eroding public trust and diverting resources from eligible households.

State options and waivers, while improving also provide an area of critical concern – the falsification of payment error rates. Between 2008 and 2013, States gamed the system to receive over \$67 million in federal bonuses. The US Department of Justice’s False Claims Act investigations exposed how States manipulated quality control processes through biased consulting advice to artificially lower reported payment error rates and secure un-deserved federal SNAP performance bonuses. **With the cost shift from the One Big Beautiful Bill going to States based on error rates, how much more will State’s abuse waivers and options?!**

<sup>2</sup> See FNS State Options Report, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-stateOptionsReport-17edition.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See 2024 SNAP Payment Error Rates, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-fy24QC-PER.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> UCOWF testimony by Past-President and Director Dawn Royal, <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Royal-Written-Testimony.pdf>

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The exploitation of State waivers and options not only erode program integrity but also divert taxpayer dollars from truly needy households, artificially inflate recipient rolls, and underscore the need for stricter federal oversight and Congressional legislation reforming the SNAP program.

We commend the Committee's ongoing efforts to oversee SNAP and ensure its effectiveness. However, addressing these state options' vulnerabilities is critical to safeguarding program integrity and maintaining public confidence. We hope that the Committee will use this hearing to explore needed reform measures for the SNAP program while signaling support for the program to return to its intended purpose with proper State administrative practices.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter and willingness to explore this issue with this hearing.

Sincerely,

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