



Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities

May 5, 2023

Statement of the National Disability Rights Network
Responding To The Senate Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing
On SNAP And Other Food Assistance In The Farm Bill

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)* appreciates the Senate Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research's April 19, 2023, hearing on SNAP and Other Nutrition Assistance in the Farm Bill. The hearing discussed the significant need for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) currently in the United States, as well as the potential negative impact of work requirements for SNAP recipients.

As discussed in the hearing, currently 41 million people in the United States rely on SNAP benefits. Most recipients are children, veterans, and people with disabilities who generally struggle with employment for different reasons. Some people with disabilities cannot work because they have a significant impairment that limits their ability to work. Many people with disabilities cannot obtain gainful employment because of discrimination from employers who refuse to employ a person with a disability. While others live in areas that do not have accessible transportation either from where they live and/or to their place of employment. As a result, persons with disabilities, and veterans who often develop a disability, cannot always successfully procure employment.

Contrary to perceptions, people with disabilities do not actively refuse to become employed. Instead, they face many barriers to employment which has kept the unemployment rate for people with disabilities almost twice the rate of those without disabilities. As a result, a work requirement for SNAP benefits only adds an additional barrier that greatly and disproportionately impacts people with disabilities to acquire these greatly needed benefits.

Thus, we are strongly opposed to including work requirements to these greatly needed food benefits.

While including a work requirement for SNAP benefits has come with a discussion that the requirement would exclude some people with disabilities, this exception is not enough to overcome the negative impact that will occur. First, the proposed requirements to demonstrate that one cannot work are extremely burdensome and difficult to accomplish, especially for those lacking access to accessible transportation.

We also feel that these requirements raise many questions that would need to be answered before implementation. What actions must a SNAP beneficiary with a disability have to demonstrate in order to waive the work requirement? Does such a waiver apply to someone with a permanent disability, or can the disability be temporary? How severe must the disability be, and what is the measurement that will be applied? Many questions currently exist, and whatever the answers are must be fully conveyed to the community in different accessible modalities to ensure widespread understanding.

Also, while a person is in pursuit of employment they need nutrition to keep them healthy enough to seek this employment. Therefore, it seems as if applying work requirements would be counter intuitive. In order to be successful in participating in society, a person first needs to be healthy enough, including a healthy diet, so they can go and engage with the community.

Again, NDRN is opposed to the implementation of these work requirement policies. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Claire Stanley, Public Policy Analyst, at Claire.stanley@ndrn.org

*NDRN is the non-profit membership association of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the United States Territories. In addition, there is a P&A affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navajo, and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

P&A agencies are authorized under various federal statutes to provide legal representation and related advocacy services, and to investigate abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities in a variety of settings. The P&A Network comprises the nation's largest provider of legally based advocacy services for persons with disabilities. NDRN and the P&A Network advocate for many people with disabilities around access to public benefits.