



**Greater Chicago Food Depository  
Statement on USDA's Rule to Limit State's Ability to Waive Work Requirements for  
Able-Bodies Adults Without Dependents  
December 5, 2019**

---

On December 4, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released its final rule that would limit states' ability to waive work requirements on able-bodied adults without dependents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). The Greater Chicago Food Depository is opposed to this rule, which is the Trump Administration's latest attack on our nation's most important anti-hunger program.

Scheduled to take effect on April 1, 2020, the proposed rule will increase the threshold states and geographic areas must meet in order to be eligible for a waiver. This will limit states' rights and hinder the program's ability to quickly respond to sudden increases in poverty and unemployment caused by sharp economic downturns or natural disasters.

Current policy allows states to apply for a waiver from the work requirements in geographic areas with insufficient jobs or high unemployment. Under the existing policy, Cook County is already scheduled to lose its eligibility for the waiver on January 1, 2020. The new policy established in the rule released today will cause nearly all counties in Illinois to also lose eligibility for the waiver as soon as April 1, 2020. It would also make it more difficult for Cook County to regain eligibility for a waiver if another economic downturn comes.

The USDA claims the rule will move people to self-sufficiency and into employment. We know this will not help struggling individuals reach their utmost potential. Most SNAP recipients who can work already do. While unemployment rates have been on a steady decline, those who struggle to gain employment frequently face significant barriers, including: low educational attainment, criminal backgrounds, limited access to transportation, and long-term unemployment. Taking food assistance from these people isn't going to help them find work.

For every meal a food bank provides, SNAP provides ten. If SNAP is cut, there is no way food banks can fully meet the increased demand for food assistance.

Every day, the Food Depository works to provide food for those in need while addressing the root causes of hunger. Through our network of 700 partner agencies and programs, we will continue to connect individuals and families across this community with the food they need to live healthy, stable lives. We also work to help those struggling to find employment gain job skills and long-term employment through our workforce training program, Chicago's Community Kitchens. Through our advocacy efforts, we will also voice our opposition to policy proposals that increase hunger in our community.

To learn more about how you can get involved with the Food Depository's advocacy efforts, visit [chicagosfoodbank.org/advocacy](http://chicagosfoodbank.org/advocacy)