



**Greater Chicago Food Depository  
Statement on Food Stamp Claim in State of the Union Address  
Feb. 5, 2019**

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In his State of the Union address, President Donald Trump touted that “7 million Americans have come off food stamps” during his administration as a result of a rising economy and wage growth among workers.

While our national economy has steadily improved, the Greater Chicago Food Depository disputes the characterization that declining participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can be wholly attributed to a booming economy.

SNAP – what many people refer to as food stamps – is the bedrock of antipoverty programs in this country and our nation’s frontline defense against hunger.

It’s true that SNAP expands and contracts in response to changes in economic need. Some of the decline in participation can be tied to the economic recovery from the Great Recession that has been underway for the past decade.

Many people are still hurting, though. Poverty and unemployment rates of more than 20 percent persist in some communities in Chicago and suburban Cook County.

For more than a year, the Food Depository has advocated against harmful SNAP proposals from the Trump administration that will result in hundreds of thousands of Americans losing needed food assistance. One rule change, set to go into effect April 1, is projected to affect more than 100,000 people in Illinois and nearly 700,000 nationwide.

There’s also a chilling effect that’s more difficult to quantify. The administration’s persistent anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric – including the constant threat of deportations – have prompted many of our neighbors in immigrant communities to not enroll in SNAP or seek food assistance of any kind.

More children will go to bed hungry as a result. That’s nothing that should be touted. It’s certainly nothing to applaud.

Every day, we see headlines of an improving economy, but too many of our neighbors are being left behind. The Food Depository provides food to older adults who fear they will outlive their retirement income, veterans who honorably served their country and still can’t afford food to live a healthy life, and working families struggling to make ends meet.

As a country, we can and must do better to protect our neighbors from hunger.