



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

CLARE E. CONNORS
ATTORNEY GENERAL

For Immediate Release
April 3, 2019

News Release 2019-13

AG Connors Joins 21 States and Territories in Opposing USDA Rule That Would Unlawfully Strip Residents of Food Stamp Benefits

Honolulu – Attorney General Clare E. Connors today joined a coalition of 21 states and territories in opposing an unlawful Trump administration effort to strip residents of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, commonly called “food stamps.” The District of Columbia, states and a territory filed a comment letter against a proposed United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) rule that would limit states’ ability to extend SNAP benefits beyond a three-month period for certain adults. This means more than 750,000 people nationwide could lose their nutrition benefits. The coalition argues that this rule actively undermines Congress’ intent in creating the food-stamp program; violates federal law because it is being implemented arbitrarily and without sufficient justification; and would hurt the states’ economies and have a disproportionate impact on protected groups.

“The USDA’s proposed SNAP rules are both inconsistent with the federal Food & Nutrition Act and unlawful,” said Attorney General Connors. “If implemented, the rules would restrict Hawaii’s efforts to alleviate hunger by helping the most vulnerable individuals achieve self-sufficiency.”

The USDA proposed rule, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents,” would affect the SNAP program—the country’s most important anti-hunger program. The program provides people with limited incomes the opportunity to access nutritious food that they otherwise would not have. SNAP is a crucial component of federal and state efforts to help lift people out of poverty.

While the federal government pays the full cost of SNAP benefits, it shares the costs of administering the program on a 50-50 basis with the states, which operate the program. The 1996 federal welfare reform law limited the time period

that unemployed able-bodied adults without dependents could access SNAP benefits to three months. However, states have the ability to request waivers for that time limit if the state or part of the state has an unemployment rate above 10 percent or does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the SNAP recipients who would otherwise lose their benefits. The proposed USDA rule would severely restrict states' ability to request such waivers.

The coalition was led by District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine, who was joined by attorneys general from California, Connecticut, Guam, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

The multistate letter to the USDA on its proposed SNAP rule is available at: <https://oag.dc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-04/Multistate-SNAP-Letter.pdf>

#

For more information, contact:

Krishna F. Jayaram
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
Department of the Attorney General
(808) 586-1284
krishna.f.jayaram@hawaii.gov