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CBPP STATEMENT

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Statement by Stacy Dean, Vice President, Food Assistance Policy, On SNAP Benefit Cuts

Nearly 48 million Americans, including 22 million children, will begin to see their food assistance benefits cut today as a temporary boost to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) ends. This benefit cut will significantly affect low-income families who continue struggling to recover from the Great Recession, and policymakers should keep that in mind as they consider further cuts to SNAP.

The 2009 Recovery Act provided a small increase in SNAP benefits to help boost the economy and reduce economic hardship. The coming benefit cut will reduce SNAP benefits, which are already modest, for all households by 7 percent on average, or about \$9 per person per month. Without the Recovery Act's boost, SNAP benefits in fiscal year 2014 will average less than \$1.40 per person per meal.

SNAP is one of the most powerful anti-hunger tools available, helping millions of low-income working families, children, seniors, people struggling to find work, and even veterans get enough to eat. Several recent studies have confirmed that SNAP benefits dramatically reduce food insecurity, which nearly 1 of every 7 households faced at some point last year. SNAP helped to keep nearly 4.7 million Americans out of poverty in 2011, including 2.1 million children, and has been a stepping stone for millions of Americans while they look for work and get back on their feet.

On top of the cuts beginning today, SNAP is facing even deeper cuts as Congress debates the future of the program. Both the House and Senate have passed legislation to cut SNAP, and a House-Senate conference committee is currently working to iron out a final bill.

The Senate bill would cut SNAP by \$4 billion over 10 years, while the House bill is far harsher — cutting SNAP by nearly \$40 billion, providing strong financial incentives for states to reduce their caseloads, and eliminating assistance for some of the poorest Americans. Ultimately, the House bill would deny benefits to about 3.8 million people in 2014 and an average of 3 million people each year over the coming decade. The proposed cuts would hit poor households while unemployment remains above 7 percent and the economy struggles to create enough jobs for those who want to and are able to work.

The benefit cut that began to take effect today will make things harder for tens of millions of Americans who are already struggling to put food on their tables each day. Policymakers should not make things even worse for them.

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