



October 19, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
United States Senate  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Conaway  
Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture  
U. S. House of Representatives  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
United States Senate  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture  
U. S. House of Representatives  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

As representatives of the 76 Directors and Administrators of the 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Universities, we are writing to express our support for the expanded role of Cooperative Extension in the implementation of Nutrition Education included in the House version of the Agriculture Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2, Sec. 4033).

Cooperative Extension is a key mission of our nation's 76 land-grant universities and serves all 3,067 counties, parishes and boroughs across the United States. Over 15,000 Extension employees develop and deliver science-based educational programs to a wide array of audiences in the areas of 4-H Youth Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Community Development. We employ well over 1,000 experts in food, nutrition and health, and we stand ready to take an even larger role in delivering a high impact and accountable nutrition education program for people across the United States.

Cooperative Extension – a nation-wide educational and outreach network – translates research from land-grant universities into community-customized solutions in agriculture, community and youth development, and health and human sciences. In partnership with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Cooperative Extension has built a strong foundation of science-based impact on the nutritional choices of low-income audiences through nutrition education programs such as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We deliver highly effective nutrition education programs and gather evidence that demonstrates that efficacy.

We understand that change is uncertain, and certainly the consolidation of EFNEP and SNAP-Ed raises concerns. Administrative costs, transition, and the formula proposed to distribute funding are areas that have received much attention. While we recognize the need to appropriately address concerns, we strongly support the thrust of the current proposal – to harmonize and improve the efficacy of our nutrition education programs through consistently measured outcomes.

In addition, and more troubling, are the concerns that have been raised regarding Cooperative Extension's ability to deliver the program along with the ability of existing SNAP-Ed participants to continue participating in the program. Cooperative Extension currently manages \$180 million in SNAP-Ed programs across the United States, with more than 3,000 staff members, over 23,000 volunteers, and upwards of 29,000 sites in the nation. In 2015 alone, 2.5 million Americans received nutrition education from SNAP-Ed through Cooperative Extension programming. Since 1969, EFNEP has successfully addressed critical societal concerns by employing paraprofessional staff and influencing nutrition and physical activity behaviors of low-income families. Through a community-based, relationship-driven, hands-on educational approach, EFNEP has directly impacted economic, obesity, and food insecurity challenges that hinder the health and well-being of low-income Americans. As to the ability of current SNAP-Ed funding recipients to continue their efforts, the reforms included in Section 4033 require eligible institutions (Cooperative Extension) to "partner with other public and private entities as appropriate to optimize program delivery." Indeed, Cooperative Extension already partners with many organizations operating in the nutrition education space and looks forward to continuing and expanding these relationships, while at the same time exploring enhanced partnerships for delivery. Partnerships are integral to Cooperative Extension's delivery of programs across the board – from 4-H to disaster preparedness and response.

The Cooperative Extension partnership with NIFA will continue to network with and fund the hundreds of existing skilled community partner organizations and expand to include more partners. The strength and reach of the land-grant universities' Cooperative Extension program will increase the reach, scope, impact, effectiveness and sustainability of existing SNAP-Ed programs, while increasing program efficiency, resulting in more SNAP recipients receiving nutrition education services at the grassroots level, and metric the results of the program – allowing researchers to analyze the data and incorporate that analysis into future nutrition education programs. It will result in a continuous cycle of program improvement through extension, research and education – the cornerstone mission of all land-grant institutions.

The land-grant community welcomes the additional responsibility contained in Section 4033 of the 2018 farm bill. The LGU mission of research, education, and extension is designed to deliver nutrition education programs. Cooperative Extension has the unique ability to ensure these programs have a real, measurable impact.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to continued discussions as you work to bring the farm bill conference to a successful conclusion.

Sincerely,



Orlando F. McMeans  
Chair  
APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly



John B. Buckwalter  
Chair  
APLU Board on Human Sciences



Alan L. Grant  
Chair  
Administrative Heads Section



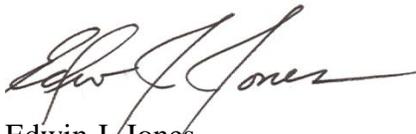
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