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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

October 30, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Conferees:

As you continue to consider the reauthorization of our nation's Farm bill, I again write to convey my continuing concerns for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

As a Governor tasked with administering SNAP for thousands of families in Massachusetts, it is disheartening to learn of the attempts by those in the House of Representatives to undermine this vital program. In Massachusetts, SNAP provides critical benefits to 880,000 individuals, 40 percent of whom are children.

For many of the families served by this program, SNAP benefits can be the difference between ensuring food is on the table or going hungry. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 83 percent of all SNAP benefits nationwide go to households with children, the

elderly, or individuals with disabilities. Many beneficiaries use the program for short-term assistance during an economic rough patch, and over half of SNAP participants are enrolled for 10 months or less. The House of Representatives' \$39 billion cut to SNAP means that millions of American children, the elderly, disabled and those struggling to make ends meet will be unable to eat.

While the Senate's proposal of \$4.1 billion in SNAP cuts is significantly less devastating than the House's, it will still have real and negative consequences. By targeting the Heat and Eat program we will see significant impacts for the 125,000 Massachusetts residents alone who participate in this option. The elimination of this program would mean a \$70 per month reduction in SNAP benefits for those households currently participating and will result in increased food insecurity. Families will be forced to choose between heating their homes or having food on the table.

The SNAP program has become an easy target. In reality, it provides the first line of defense against hunger and undernutrition and ensures that millions of vulnerable Americans – many of them working people – have access to food.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to comment as you continue to consider the future of the SNAP program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Paul G. Ryan", written in a cursive style.

cc: Farm Bill Conference Committee Members
Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation