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General Comment

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Dear Ms. Proska, Sir, or Madam:

FNS would do well to consider the overall cost of this proposed action before taking it. By "overall cost," I mean the set of costs to Federal and state agencies that is likely to issue from direct results of this action. To responsibly advance this limitation of supplemental nutrition assistance, for example, you need evidence-based answers to questions including these: (1) Will the costs of providing Medicare benefits increase when persons approaching 65 years of age who are affected by FNS-2019-0025 degrade their nutrition because they cannot afford health-sustaining food? The statement "Whatever is the mother of a disease, (poor nutrition) is the father." is attributed to Hippocrates. Degrading the nutrition of aging citizens is arguably the greatest single source of health declines in the Medicare population. We know that chronic diseases, most of which are affected by nutrition, consumes nearly 80 percent of Medicare

costs. To degrade the nutrition of low-income people over 50 is to greatly increase the likelihood of greatly increased Medicare costs. (2) Degrading the nutrition of poor children, including depriving them of school lunches, is likely to increase the number of prediabetic and otherwise less healthy Americans across the lifespan. (3) Besides these costs to our healthcare systems, the costs of worsened educational outcomes and lifetime earnings will increase. Indeed, it is likely that the higher taxes as a result of nutrition-mediated education outcomes alone could offset the costs of the current SNAP program.

These considerations should help to shape policy in a government that professes fiscal responsibility, and they say nothing of inhumanity.

Sincerely
Elizabeth Coons