ABAWD Proposed Rule - Comment Card Instructions and Background

**Background:**

* On February 1st, the United States Department of Agriculture published a [proposed rule](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/02/01/2018-28059/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-requirements-for-able-bodied-adults-without-dependents) that would increase hunger and hardship for some of the nation’s poorest individuals.
* Under current law, individuals on SNAP/CalFresh who are 18-49 years old and do not have dependents under 18 are deemed to be able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) and may be subject to a 3-month time limit.
* SNAP/CalFresh recipients subject to the ABAWD time limit are limited to just 3 months of benefits in a 36-month window, unless they are working the required 20 hours per week under the current rule or qualify for an exemption.
* Under SNAP regulations, a state or region can request waivers from the time limit from USDA for areas with high unemployment or areas that lack sufficient jobs.
* Area waivers are a critical backstop to protect food assistance for individuals looking for work but unable to find sufficient hours.
* California’s statewide waiver expired on August 31, 2018.
* All but three counties (Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco) qualified for area waivers from the time limit until August 31, 2019.

**What’s Changed:**

* The proposed rule seeks to reduce State flexibility to waive the time limit in areas without sufficient jobs.
* The proposed rule rejects the approach taken up by the 2018 bi-partisan farm bill, which fought to protect SNAP benefits, maintain current area waivers and provide ongoing investments to support job opportunity through employment and training efforts.

**The Potential Impact:**

* According to USDA’s own estimates, the proposed rule would take food away from 755,000 people, causing serious harm to communities in California and across the country.
* The proposed rule would cut SNAP/CalFresh benefits by $15 billion dollars over ten years increasing hunger, poverty and hardship.
* The proposed rule denies people food assistance when they need it most and makes it more difficult, not less to find a job.
* SNAP drives over $11 billion in total economic activity annually in California and the proposed rule would harm our local economies, retailers and agricultural producers by reducing the amount of SNAP dollars people have to spend on food.

**Tips to Write Your Own Comment:** Using the comment postcard and prompts below, write a few short sentences to explain why you believe the proposed rule would be harmful to the poorest Californians in your community.

* 1. Explain why this change will increase hunger and poverty in your community
  2. If you’ve ever been hungry, speak about the impact that hunger had on your ability to work or find work.
  3. If you’ve ever struggled to find work or had your work hours cut unexpectedly, how did that impact your ability to make ends meet?