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The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chair
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

June 26, 2018

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow,

We are writing to thank you for your continued leadership as you work towards authorizing the 2018 Farm Bill. As leaders in promoting population health, the Population Health Alliance (PHA) understands the importance of providing affordable, nutritious food to all people in the United States. We know that many treatments are less effective if patients do not have adequate access to enough healthy food, a condition known as food insecurity. Increasingly in the healthcare sector, there have been efforts to strengthen the understanding of the long-term health effects that a lack of food, and more importantly, a lack of nutritious food can have on the health and success of an individual. It is particularly important that we help address the needs of the 41 million food insecure Americans in communities across the country. PHA's own recent research, which has focused on the impact of social determinants of health on population health, shows that lack of consistent access to nutritious food affects individuals' ability to manage their chronic conditions and overall medical costs and maintain or improve their functionality and quality of life.

The nutrition programs in the Farm Bill, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), help reduce food insecurity and play an important role in providing access to foods that play a crucial role in the prevention of chronic disease. The inability to maintain a normal food-intake pattern is associated with increased rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma and heart disease. SNAP helps families provide more consistent access to healthy foods and is vital to the overall health of low-income families, especially in the development of children. Food insecurity impairs the performance of children in school and increases the likelihood of long-term behavioral and psychological problems. According to a new study published in JAMA Internal Medicine, individuals enrolled in SNAP have health care expenditures that are, on average, \$1,400 less per year than those of similar individuals who are not enrolled in SNAP.

Restricting access to SNAP or cutting benefit levels threatens the health of those we serve and may actually lead to higher costs, not less. As the Committee continues the important work of ensuring a safe and affordable food supply for Americans, we urge you to ensure that SNAP and other vital nutrition

programs remain protected and strengthened for qualifying individuals to reduce food insecurity in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helene S. Forte", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Helene S. Forte, RN, MS, PAHM
Chair, PHA Government Affairs Committee
Vice President, Public Plans Emerging Markets
Tufts Health Plan