

Durbin, Duckworth, Bustos, Davis Lead Illinois Delegation In Opposing Usda Effort To End Food Stamp Program At Illinois Senior Living Facilities

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with U.S. Representatives Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17) and Rodney Davis (R-IL-13), today led the bipartisan Illinois Congressional Delegation on a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue opposing the Department's administrative overreach and ongoing efforts to end Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for a group of supportive living facilities (SLFs) in Illinois that serve 8,000 low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities. In their letter, the members criticized USDA's cruel and rigid plan to terminate SNAP benefits for these vulnerable seniors in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite legislative action and prior commitments in Congressional testimony from USDA to preserve SNAP

benefits for this group, and twenty years of USDA approval for this arrangement that helps keep low-income seniors out of more institutional nursing home settings.

There are SLFs in every Illinois Congressional District and in 71 Illinois counties. A complete list of SLFs in Illinois is available [here](#).

“It is unacceptable to leave 8,000 seniors vulnerable especially during the holiday season and in the middle of the worst public health crisis in a century. We respectfully request USDA explore every possible grace period, enforcement discretion, or waiver to prevent this catastrophic outcome on January 1, 2021,” wrote the members.

The members, in their letter, cite recent efforts by USDA to deny and revoke SNAP participation from these Illinois facilities, despite provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill and Fiscal Year 2020 Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill that protect these vulnerable residents and SNAP participation of SLFs.

Illinois’s SLF program was created in 1997 through a state law designed to be an alternative to institutional nursing settings for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities under Medicaid. For more than twenty years, the Illinois’s SLF program has been a nationally leading model in promoting affordable, independent-living options, and has relied upon a federal Medicaid waiver to serve this population.

USDA has threatened to end the SNAP program for these Illinois SLFs despite no findings of fraud or misuse of SNAP benefits, and despite the fact that Illinois SLFs comprise a fraction of one percent of the SNAP program yet importantly serve a very low-income and vulnerable population. For decades, USDA consistently authorized new SLFs and re-authorized existing SLFs across Illinois as SNAP participants, enabling the facilities to serve meals in an innovative and efficient manner by pooling SNAP benefits for meals for eligible low-income disabled and elderly residents who otherwise would face physical difficulty with conventional individual grocery purchases using SNAP.

The letter was signed by the following members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation: U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and U.S. Representatives Bobby Rush (D-IL-01), Robin Kelly (D-IL-02), Dan Lipinski (D-IL-03), Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (D-IL-04), Mike Quigley (D-IL-05), Sean Casten (D-IL-06), Danny Davis (D-IL-07), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL-08), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-09), Brad Schneider (D-IL-10), Bill Foster (D-IL-11), Mike Bost (R-IL-12), Rodney Davis (R-IL-13), Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14), John Shimkus (R-IL-15), Adam Kinzinger (R-IL-16), Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17), and Darin LaHood (R-IL-18).

Full text of the letter is available [her](#)