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HOUSE FARM BILL PROPOSAL BAD FOR ARKANSAS SENIORS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Media Statement from Kathy Webb, executive director Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

LITTLE ROCK, AR (April 12, 2018) – “The Farm Bill has historically been bipartisan legislation that acknowledges the interconnectedness of our country’s food systems. It invests in income supports for widely-produced crops, agricultural research and education, crop insurance to protect farmers from the immense risk involved in their business, and nutrition programs that help Americans afford the food our farmers produce and our families need.

“Ultimately, the Farm Bill impacts everything from how our food is grown to who can afford to purchase it. For each of us to have consistent access to wholesome foods, we rely on farmers and producers, distributors, retailers and fellow consumers. The Farm Bill – adjusted every five years or so to remain current with our agricultural needs – has promoted a sustainable food system since 1933. It does so through a genuine, bipartisan commitment to ensuring everyone in our ‘food chain’ – from farmers to consumers – have the support they need to fulfill their critical role in this continuum and meet their basic need for food.

“We’re a statewide association of six Feeding America food banks and more than 500 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other hunger relief agencies. Our primary concern is that the [recently released partisan 2018 House Farm Bill proposal](#) undermines access to basic nutrition assistance for low-income Arkansans living on the margins. It will increase hunger and contribute to escalating health care costs. Instead of maintaining our country’s long-term commitment to preventing hunger and ensuring access to basic nutrition when our fellow Americans fall on hard times, it kicks older workers and families with children to the curb.

“As an example, this misguided Farm Bill will require a parent with children ages 7 and 9 to immediately enter a mandatory work training program the moment his or her hours at work are

cut in order to continue feeding their family – all in the midst of a household crisis. It would require a 58-year-old to immediately enter a mandatory work training program the moment he or she receives a pink slip. Rather than providing basic, temporary help with food during times of need, this bill will cost tax payers thousands in unnecessary training and administrative costs.

“The reality is that most SNAP recipients in Arkansas are children, seniors, people with disabilities or low-wage workers, and on average, each SNAP recipient in Arkansas receives just \$110 a month to help buy groceries – that \$1.20 per meal. These supposed ‘solutions’ put forth in the House Farm Bill Proposal, are trying to solve problems that don’t exist.

“This proposal endangers our entire food system. It puts more local grocers and retailers who accept SNAP at risk of closing their doors. It puts farmers already struggling to cope with factors from climate change to trade disputes at risk of even further adversity. It is, quite simply, bad policy.

“The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance urges our members of Congress to contemplate the real-world consequences of taking basic food assistance away from older workers and parents with children. We’re better than this! We ask them to oppose this Farm Bill, in the name of the more than 380,000 Arkansans that need help from SNAP to afford groceries, and in the name of Arkansas’s most important economic sector, agriculture.”

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About Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is a statewide, non-profit collaborative network of more than 500 hunger relief and advocacy organizations across Arkansas. Our founding members include the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro, Harvest Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfolk, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights and River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith. The Alliance is dedicated to reducing hunger through direct relief, education and advocacy. We invite you to visit www.ARhungeralliance.org for details on hunger relief programs, donor and volunteer opportunities.