

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2024

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1010 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott,

Kids are eating 150 times more sugar than they did 100 years ago.<sup>1</sup> The average American child consumes 66 grams of added sugar per day, which amounts to 53 pounds of added sugar per year.<sup>2</sup> The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should aim for less than 25 grams of added sugar per day, meaning the average American child is eating over twice the recommended amount of added sugar per day.<sup>3</sup> Our current policies are structured in a way that heavily subsidizes highly processed food, making it more practical for American families to buy unhealthy than healthy food.

Our disastrous food policies are wreaking havoc and destroying the metabolic health of the American people. 38% of all American adults have prediabetes, 41.9% of men and 34.3 % of women.<sup>4</sup> The most recent data says that 19.3% of children are clinically obese up from 5.2% in 1971, an almost fourfold increase in 50 years. In 1970, the United States spent \$74.1 billion on health expenditures. By 2000, health expenditures reached \$1.4 trillion, and by 2021 the amount was \$4.3 trillion, approximately \$13,000 per person.<sup>5</sup> Despite the massive increases in spending, health outcomes have gotten exponentially worse. Instead of taking responsibility for their destructive actions, big food and big pharma are finding new ways to profit from America’s obesity epidemic.<sup>6</sup>

As you continue to work on the 2024 Farm Bill, it is imperative to incentivize healthy outcomes that will save the American taxpayer billions in future healthcare costs. One such proposal that should be included in this year’s farm bill is H.R. 4058, Congressman Josh Brecheen’s Healthy SNAP Act of 2023.<sup>7</sup> The legislation would amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to prohibit Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars from being used to purchase soft drinks, candy, ice cream, and prepared desserts. The intended purpose of SNAP is to provide

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<sup>1</sup> <https://calleymean.com/2022/05/19/we-need-to-get-to-the-root-cause/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sugar/how-much-sugar-is-too-much>

<sup>3</sup> <https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/7331/Added-sugar-in-kids-diets-How-much-is-too-much?autologincheck=redirected>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/data/statistics-report/prevalence-of-prediabetes.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-spending-healthcare-changed-time/#Total%20national%20health%20expenditures,%20US%20\\$%20Billions,%201970-2021](https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-spending-healthcare-changed-time/#Total%20national%20health%20expenditures,%20US%20$%20Billions,%201970-2021)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/06/11/weight-loss-ozempic-wegovy-insurance/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4058?s=2&r=5>

benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford nutritious food essential to health and well-being.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, 20% of all SNAP dollars are spent on junk food and sugary soft drinks, calling into question the entire program. Specifically, 10% of all SNAP dollars are spent on sodas, which is about three times more than the amount spent on milk.<sup>9</sup>

I am proud to represent the state of Montana, which has incredible cattle and produces the best beef in the world. In 2021, Montana produced 34,400,000 pounds of red meat.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Montana has one of the lowest childhood obesity rates in the nation, which should be modeled by the rest of the nation.<sup>11</sup> It makes sense to spend SNAP dollars on beef, which is an excellent source of protein and includes essential nutrients such as vitamins, zinc, and iron, instead of sugary sodas and desserts. I know both of your districts are blessed to have some of the best farmers that the Farm Bill should be further geared towards helping. This additional revenue should go to the family farm, not large multinational corporations.

Our country is at a crossroads; subsidizing unhealthy, highly processed food makes Americans sick. The 2024 Farm Bill must be focused on helping farmers have economic security and ensuring consumers have proper access to healthy, nutritious food. Thank you, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/10/29/659634119/food-stamps-for-soda-time-to-end-billion-dollar-subsidy-for-sugary-drinks#:~:text=SNAP%20households%20spend%20about%2010,are%20subsidized%20by%20U.S.%20taxpayers.>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Montana/Publications/Charts\\_and\\_Graphs/2021-MT-Cattle-info.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/Publications/Charts_and_Graphs/2021-MT-Cattle-info.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/demographic-data/ages-10-17/>