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U.S. House Agriculture Committee Subcommittee on Nutrition

Hearing:

“The Past, Present and Future of SNAP:
Innovation and Success in Employment and Training”
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Written Testimony:

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California is moving to significantly expand both the quantity and quality of Employment & Training (E&T) services offered by the 58 county human services agencies to the 4.4 million participants in SNAP (known as CalFresh). The State, the counties, private service providers, employers and other workforce stakeholders are working in partnership to assist more participants than ever before in obtaining good jobs, securing better wages, and attaining careers that lead to self-sufficiency.

SNAP E&T Priorities: A total of 33 of California’s 58 county human services agencies, serving the majority of the State’s SNAP E&T eligible population, plan to offer a voluntary SNAP E&T program in the upcoming federal fiscal year, up from 25 counties in the current year. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is prioritizing three strategies to support and strengthen California counties’ SNAP E&T programs:

1. **Outcomes.** CDSS is focused on measuring outcomes for participants by strengthening reporting systems throughout the state. To this end, CDSS will facilitate the collection of employment and wage data for SNAP E&T programs through a new data sharing agreement with the California Employment Development Department (EDD). This agreement is in part a result of the existing outcome measurement efforts of counties like San Francisco, which in tracking 752 participants found that: 46% have earnings 18 months after exiting E&T; 53% are no longer receiving SNAP benefits at that point; and overall, there is a 123% increase in earnings from 6 months pre- and 6 months post- E&T participation. CDSS is also exploring the possibility of joining a centralized, statewide data-matching workforce hub that may be accessed by local and regional workforce boards, SNAP E&T programs, and other workforce programs to support accurate, comprehensive data collection across this sector.
2. **Comprehensive Job-Driven Approach.** California counties are weaving together job training, especially vocational and certificate programs; barrier removal; and case management to deliver effective workforce services to SNAP participants that lead to better jobs, wages, and careers. As an example of this effort, CDSS and our county partners are

forging a new partnership with the State's workforce development system, as many priority populations, services and outcomes align with SNAP E&T. CDSS also has been chosen as one of ten states to participate in the "SNAP to Skills" program administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. SNAP to Skills provides multifaceted technical assistance in the design and development of better and stronger job-driven SNAP E&T programs. These models provide for tailoring to the local and regional job-market -- both to the employment sectors and to the employee population, including special populations like veterans, those recently released from prison, and first generation college students.

3. **Public-Private Partnerships to Deliver E&T Services.** Next fiscal year, California's 33 SNAP E&T counties will contract with more than 40 organizations across the state, most of which are nonprofit agencies. Over 20% of county E&T budgets are for these contractual services, an increase of \$7.8 million over the current fiscal year. Many contracts are for third-party reimbursement programs, which are programs operated by non-government providers that self-fund at least half of their costs to serve the SNAP population and receive the available federal match. Under this model, Fresno County is participating in the national, 10-site pilot with Reading and Beyond's Bridges Academy. Other counties are piloting an innovative third-party intermediary model known as "Fresh Success: under this model, Sacramento and Santa Clara counties are partnering with their local community colleges and Contra Costa County with a local non-profit organization to deliver E&T services.

Recommendations: Based on the experiences of CDSS and the counties operating and expanding SNAP E&T, we respectfully recommend for the Committee's consideration:

1. **Further Alignment between Workforce Investments**, such as those funded through SNAP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to deliver unified services to our families and streamline administration, reporting, and service delivery.
2. **Allow E&T Wage Subsidies to Engage More Employers**, especially to encourage taking a chance on more vulnerable employees. San Francisco County's JOBS NOW! uses local funds to partner with private employers to great success. Allowing SNAP E&T funds to be used for subsidized wages would allow more counties and more employers to participate.
3. **Continue 100% and 50-50 Match Funding** to ensure high-quality services, rigorous outcome measurement, and effective oversight.

Work Success Stories: The State, counties, private service providers, employers, and other stakeholders are working together with USDA to provide rigorous outcome data. Equally compelling are the individual stories of graduates of SNAP E&T programs, like this one from San Francisco:

Hello, my name is Denise Baker and I'm fifty years old. I was born and raised in Oklahoma City. I came from a middle class family of six. I didn't have it rough growing up. I came from a family who valued morals and ethics. But when I became an adult, I chose the wrong path in life chasing the

cares of this world and going down the wrong path knowing right from wrong. And yet, I chose to be a part of the wrong crowd.

Because I chose wrong ways, it took me to places I didn't want to be in like jails and prison and that became my way of life for the next twenty seven years. It was then when I hit rock bottom because of the vicious cycle of drug use that I couldn't seem to change my life in an atmosphere that was unhealthy for me that I became suicidal. And before I could carry it out, I heard a voice inside me saying, "Call your daughter who lives in California"! So I did. I told her what was going on in my life and I needed to change. She sent for me and from that very moment, my life changed forever! She brought me to a place in San Francisco in hopes to find help for me, and she did. Here is where hope became possible.

I applied for General Assistance and SNAP benefits and the job resources became unlimited! I started participating in SNAP E & T activities and heard about the JOBS NOW! program. The UCSF EXCEL internship program is part of the wage subsidy tier of JOBS NOW! After being accepted to the program I participated in a ten-week classroom skills training with one of the E & T training providers, and learned how to use Microsoft Office, professional communication, and improved my public speaking skills by presenting on topics to my classmates.

After completing the skills training, I started a four-month subsidized employment internship with the UCSF Medical Center. After completing my internship I was offered a full-time temporary position with the UCSF Medical Center Human Resources department. I am responsible for turning paper into digital and I love my job and the people I work for and with. It has been very rewarding for me to be a part of a society of working people.

Through this experience I have a new-found respect for people who work hard every day to provide for their families while also helping others improve their work skills. Thanks to programs like SNAP E & T and JOBS NOW!, I now believe in myself and know that I am employable and can become a productive member of society by doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do!

Thank you for taking a chance on someone like me who didn't believe that I could be a success story. I am doing great and I'm still employed with UCSF Medical Center to this very day. There are so many people who have not been given this opportunity for change. I feel programs like SNAP E & T in San Francisco help a lot of people come out of their rut and low to no income situations.

Thank you for including the California Department of Social Services, our counties, our clients, and our partners in this important discussion of Employment and Training opportunities, so more participants in SNAP can achieve better jobs, wages, and careers.