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Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**

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**Testimony by:
Center for Employment Opportunities
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Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the important role the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's Employment & Training program (SNAP E&T) plays in the lives of millions of our fellow Americans. I am Sam Schaeffer, the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), a national nonprofit that this year will provide employment services to more than 5,000 men and women recently released from incarceration. My testimony is informed by my experience administering several SNAP E&T programs; CEO's talented staff; partners including federal, state and local government agencies; and most importantly CEO's participants and their families who benefit from SNAP benefits and our program every day.

Since 2009 SNAP E&T has supported job training and placement for over 1,600 people at CEO. Nearly every one of these individuals enrolled in our program just days or weeks after being released from prison. They were all eager to work. However, with felony convictions, limited work experience, and in some cases long gaps in their resume, finding a job was a daunting challenge. During those first months of transition home, when statistics said they were likely to recidivate, the SNAP E&T program helped address the hunger they faced and put them on a path to employment.

Funding from E&T has helped CEO collaborate with jurisdictions across the country and grow from one location in New York City to 18 sites across 6 states. We work closely with state partners to design programs responsive to local needs. This program's value and future potential cannot be understated. SNAP E&T is essential for the survival of individual people and the health, security, and prosperity of communities. Without it, many other problems we are trying to solve - promoting opportunity, supporting strong families, keeping communities safe - become much harder, if not impossible. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective and recommendations with the committee.

The Background and Importance of SNAP E&T Funding

According to the most recent data from USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) approximately 42 million individuals receive SNAP benefits.¹ These benefits are critical for many individuals facing deep poverty and high barriers to employment. In 2014, 58 percent of SNAP benefits went to 43 percent of SNAP households. These families had gross incomes of 50 percent or less of the federal

¹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. (August 2017). SNAP Monthly Program Participation and Costs Report. Accessible at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/pd/34SNAPmonthly.pdf>.

poverty guidelines.² SNAP is also used by individuals working full-time who just can't make ends meet. SNAP is a necessity for families in all fifty states, in communities urban, suburban, and rural.

SNAP E&T was created in 1985 to help individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency and reduce their reliance on nutrition assistance benefits. It is one of the few federal programs designed solely to provide targeted employment and training resources to help lower-skilled, lower-income adults find meaningful connections to the labor market. A relatively small percent of individuals receiving SNAP benefits participate in SNAP E&T programs. Children, the elderly, and the disabled (together 64 percent of SNAP beneficiaries) are exempted from work programs, and another 22 percent are already working full-time. The remaining 14 percent work less than 30 hours a week or are unemployed. Due to a variety of exemptions and waivers, in 2015 approximately 4.95 million people (11.7 percent) participated in some type of SNAP E&T program.³

In recent years, Congress has appropriated \$90 million in funding to states to support the administration of what has come to be known as "100 percent" SNAP E&T funds. These 100 percent funds are administered on a formula basis to 53 U.S. states and territories. An additional source of support called "50/50 funding" requires a non-federal match to be accessed and comprises a much greater percentage of overall SNAP E&T funding. In 2015, \$507 million in combined federal and match funding supported the SNAP E&T programs.⁴ Federal 50/50 funds were matched by \$199M from states, philanthropy, and non-profit organizations, representing a significant leveraging of resources.

While funded federally, SNAP E&T programs are administered and designed on the state and local level. The authorizing legislation allows tremendous flexibility, though few performance standards, for how to implement and operate programs. In order to be responsive to local labor markets and geographies, states can develop strategies that meet the needs of job-seekers and local employers.

² Kelsey Farson Gray and Shivani Kochhar, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2014, US Department of Agriculture, December 2015.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2014.pdf>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015, by Kelsey Farson Gray, Sarah Fisher, and Sarah Lauffer. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA, 2016.

⁴ Kogan, Deborah, Anne Paprocki, and Hannah Diaz. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) Best Practices Study: Final Report. Prepared by Social Policy Research Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 2016. p.II-4.

The 4.95 million SNAP E&T recipients participated in a range of services including job search assistance, job training, workfare, work experience programming, on the job trainings, GED preparation, and self-employment assistance, among other activities. To date, states have been more likely to use lower-cost, less intensive approaches like job search assistance over higher-cost, more intensive programs like on the job training or transitional work (see chart).⁵

E&T Program Component	% of States Offering Service
Independent Job Search	68%
Job Search Training (job clubs, resume workshops)	66%
Workfare/WEP	32%
On the Job Training, Apprenticeships	17%
Basic Education, ESL, GED, Vocational	66%
Self-Employment	9%
Job Retention Services	36%

A 2015 study commissioned by USDA found that stand-alone basic skills instruction and job search assistance programs are less effective helping participants achieve self-sufficiency. In contrast, more intensive services that combine several components simultaneously or sequentially appear more promising in helping achieve the desired improvements in employment and earnings.⁶

Further data about the poverty level and work experience of SNAP recipients suggests that many individuals would benefit from longer, more intensive workforce development activities such as on-the-job training, transitional work, vocational training, and job retention services. Individuals on SNAP who are working are more likely than non-recipients to be in lower-paying positions, while those not working face significant barriers to entering the labor market. A 2014 University of Southern Maine report found that Maine SNAP recipients were significantly more likely to have lower educational attainment than adults that do not receive SNAP benefits. Further, less than 15% of SNAP recipients in the study reported employment in higher-paying Managerial and Professional

⁵ USDA Food and Nutrition Services. Employment and Training Toolkit (USDA 2014) p. 8. Accessible at https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ET_Toolkit_2013.pdf.

⁶ Kogan, Deborah, Anne Paprocki, and Hannah Diaz. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) Best Practices Study: Final Report. Prepared by Social Policy Research Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 2016. p.10.

Work occupations, compared to almost 1/3 of adults that work but do not receive SNAP.⁷

Over the last thirty years, the E&T program has remained a consistent source of support for states but has evolved in key ways. Notably, in 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) mandated work registration requirements for work-eligible adults. Additionally, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) were limited to receiving benefits in three of any thirty-six months if they did not become employed or participate in an allowable work activity for 20 hours weekly. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act expanded SNAP benefits significantly and saw several states apply for, and receive, waivers to the ABAWD requirement on the basis of high local unemployment.

The 2014 Farm Bill placed renewed emphasis on work, as well as learning and evaluation. The legislation provided \$200M for pilots in 10 states to expand SNAP E&T and test innovative strategies connecting recipients to employment. Pilot sites have developed programs that range in the intensity of services and address local needs. For example, the Fresno Bridge Academy Program is a public-private collaborative providing job training, subsidized employment, and case management to high-need SNAP recipients including high school dropouts and individuals with criminal records, among others. All 10 sites are participating in a rigorous randomized control trial that will provide lessons for the field.

While there is relatively little dedicated research analyzing SNAP E&T outcomes -- the long-term impact on employment, nutrition, or other areas -- these pilots will contribute to an evidence base upon which future efforts can expand, iterate, and continue to meet the needs of individuals. By adopting an ethos of continuous improvement within dedicated SNAP E&T programs, there is a great potential to improve quality and outcomes.

And while these pilots have the potential to greatly advance our knowledge of SNAP, effective public-private partnerships have already been part of the E&T program for years. For example, Washington State's Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) program leverages partnerships with state, educational, and community agencies to provide services and has helped thousands of

⁷ Victoria Ryan, Characteristics of Working Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Recipients in Maine, according to the 2011 American Community Survey. University of Southern Maine. May 2014.
http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=muskie_capstones

individuals obtain and retain employment.⁸ Finally, SNAP E&T program objectives align with core aspects of evidence-based employment programs such as transitional employment, sector based-job training, and job retention. Activities proven to help participants build essential skills that can lead to financial independence and food security have the potential be replicated and scaled within the E&T program.⁹

The opportunity for SNAP E&T to Serve the Formerly Incarcerated

More than 615,000 people leave state prisons annually. Within three years of release, about two-thirds (67.8 percent) of those released are rearrested for a new crime.¹⁰ The U.S. spends \$82 billion annually on incarceration.¹¹ While addressing this challenge may seem daunting, it should be a national imperative to improve these outcomes and reduce taxpayer spending. SNAP E&T can play a key role in redefining how someone comes home from prison and gets a job. Given labor market challenges faced by the formerly incarcerated, along with their struggle in gaining access to healthy food, the SNAP E&T program is particularly well suited to support these individuals in states around the country.

More generally, SNAP E&T has the potential to move some of our country's most at-risk populations out of poverty by addressing the dual challenge of economic and food security. While CEO's expertise is working with people returning from incarceration, there are parallels to the needs of other groups including people experiencing homelessness and the chronically unemployed, among others. Through highlighting the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals, this section illustrates the critical support SNAP E&T can play for a broad range of populations living in poverty and with barriers to employment.

While exact numbers are not clear, a meaningful number of SNAP recipients have criminal records.

⁸ *The Past, Present, Future of SNAP: Evaluating Effectiveness and Outcomes in Nutrition Education before the House Agricultural Committee Subcommittee on Nutrition*. September 13, 2016 (statement of David Stillman, Assistant Secretary of Economic Services Administration, Washington State Department of Social & Health Services).

⁹ Kogan, Deborah, Anne Paprocki, and Hannah Diaz. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) Best Practices Study: Final Report. Prepared by Social Policy Research Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 2016. P. III-3 - III-23.

¹⁰ Durose, Matthew R., Alexia D. Cooper, and Howard N. Snyder, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010* (pdf, 31 pages), Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, April 2014, NCJ 244205

¹¹ Melissa Kearney and Benjamin Harris, "Ten Facts About Crime and Incarceration in the United States" (Washington: The Hamilton Project, 2014), available at www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/ten_economic_facts_about_crime_and_incarceration_in_the_united_states/.

Over the last decade states have lessened or eliminated laws barring people with criminal convictions from receiving SNAP benefits. A 2015 study in Franklin County Ohio showed that over 35.3% of the people in their SNAP Work Experience Program (WEP) had felony convictions; some people had multiple felonies, or a combination of felonies and misdemeanors.¹² Depending on the location between 50 to 100 percent of the people CEO serves qualify for SNAP benefits - all of them have criminal records.

Upon release from incarceration, individuals face many barriers to successful reentry, including securing safe, clean affordable housing; accessing health and mental health services; maintaining sobriety; as well as other challenges. Obtaining income and food security are two significant barriers.

Regardless of motivation, finding full-time employment with a felony conviction can be arduous. Incarcerated men and women have lower post-secondary attainment and skills training than the general US population according to the most recent Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).¹³

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
	<i>US Prison</i>	<i>US Household</i>
<i>Highest Level of Educational Attainment</i>		
<i>Graduate or Professional Degree</i>	1	11
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	1	17
<i>Associate's Degree</i>	4	9
<i>High School Credential</i>	64	50
<i>Below High School</i>	30	14

At CEO, we encounter this skills deficit everyday: half of CEO’s participants have never worked

¹² A Comprehensive Assessment of Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS) and Their Participation in the Work Experience Program in Franklin County, Ohio 2015 - Report 2015. Ohio Association of Food Banks. P. 9 <http://ohiofoodbanks.org/wep/WEP-2013-2015-report.pdf>

¹³ Rampey, B.D., Keiper, S., Mohadjer, L., Krenzke, T., Li, J., Thornton, N., and Hogan, J. (2016). Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training: Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies: 2014 (NCES 2016-040). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

before, and all have been removed from the workforce for an extended period.

Research also shows that people in prison are concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution at the time their incarceration begins.¹⁴ Even when individuals returning home secure a job, they remain in poverty and reliant on benefits. Serving time reduces hourly wages for men by approximately 11 percent, annual employment by 9 weeks, and annual earnings by 40 percent.¹⁵

Food insecurity is prevalent in this group. In a 2013 survey of CEO's New York City participants, 41 percent reported that since being released from prison they had run out of food and lacked the resources to secure more. Further, 43 percent reported that running out of food was a "major concern." The concern was amplified amongst those who had served longer sentences: more than 60% of individuals who had been incarcerated 10 or more years reported food insecurity.

Addressing food insecurity and employment through a single government intervention is aligned with what we know about hunger and poverty. People who are hungry are incapable of focusing on the things we ask them to - making a career plan, showing up ready to work, being patient with coworkers and supervisors, and controlling their impulses. Researchers have documented what we see at CEO; even motivated individuals cannot function well when their mind is occupied with not knowing where their next meal will come from.¹⁶ These concerns have real impacts, with economists finding measurable drops in IQ in both real and simulated conditions of scarcity. In short, SNAP E&T is well positioned to addressing this dual challenge of hunger and poverty.

CEO's Employment Reentry Program

The CEO program and our organization's use of E&T funds provides an example of how individuals can move from incarceration to employment. While CEO's program is a proven intervention, it is by no means a one-size-fits-all model for E&T programs. We want to make clear that there are numerous other evidence-based non-profit organizations who could move people -- at scale -- into

¹⁴ The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010. Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts

¹⁵ The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010. Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts

¹⁶ Mullainathan, S and Shafir, E. (2013) *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*. Time Books, Henry Holt & Company LLC, New York, NY.

employment.

CEO's vision is that anyone returning from prison who wants to work has the preparation and support needed to find a job and stay attached to the labor force. This creates safer communities and healthier individuals and families, all at a fraction of the cost of incarceration. CEO's model consists of four phases that participants move through at their own pace, enabling each person to address their own unique barriers to employment. Each phase of our evidence-based program aligns closely with several SNAP E&T components including job search training, work experience, skills training, and job retention.

Phase I: Recruitment and Job Readiness Training

CEO targets the highest risk, hardest to serve individuals. We recruit directly from parole and probation officers, optimally within the first 90 days of release. Everyone who comes to CEO is unemployed. We don't screen for attitude, education, or experience. Our ideal client is someone who needs a job and is likely to fail in their reentry without a targeted intervention. Forty-three (43) percent of our participants are young adults, under 26 years of age. Nearly 1 in 2 is a parent. Half have never worked, and only 10% have any education above high school or its equivalent.

Phase I: Pathways to Employment

CEO's program begins with a brief life skills education course called "*Pathways to Employment*" in the first week, where participants learn best practices for applying to jobs, interviewing, and overcoming the stigma of a conviction. The class functions as an onboarding to CEO. CEO also works with participants to procure all necessary identification documents, removing a frequent barrier that prevents them from legally stepping onto a job site and receiving a paycheck.

Phase II: Transitional Employment

After graduation, participants are immediately eligible to begin working on a CEO transitional job site four days a week. Across the country, our social enterprise has 70+ work crews that provide basic maintenance and custodial services to public and private sector customers. For example, in New York City, crews maintain eight college campuses in the City University system; in Oklahoma, they are helping build homes for tornado victims; in Philadelphia, they are helping maintain city parks; and in Colorado, Ohio, and California the crews perform litter abatement for state departments of transportation. The crews work in groups of 5-7 people and are overseen by a CEO

site supervisor. At the end of every shift they are evaluated on their performance and paid. Participants develop basic workplace skills in a supportive, work-based learning environment. Working for CEO gives participants an opportunity to earn income within one week of enrollment, building income stability during a vulnerable period post-release.

Phase III: Full-time Job Placement

Concurrent with working a transitional job, CEO participants receive a full suite of vocational services. CEO uses the experience gained on transitional work sites to develop participants' competencies and place them in jobs with permanent employers. CEO's Business Account Managers focus on building relationships with local businesses and filling job orders to match participants to employer specifications. Businesses value CEO as a ready source of job-ready labor that can fulfill their hiring needs.

Phase IV: Job Retention

CEO recognizes the tenacity required of participants to remain connected to the workforce. Participants receive retention services from CEO for a full year after job placement. CEO's team of dedicated Retention Specialists provide services include workplace counseling, crisis management, and career planning. An incentive-based program, Rapid Rewards, provides monthly payments to enrolled participants who attain retention milestones.

CEO's Evidence Base of Effectiveness

Outcomes-based non-profits such as CEO provide insight for how SNAP E&T programs can improve results and put federal resources to better use. This is important particularly as SNAP E&T 50/50 partnerships have an increased focus on the rigor and evidence of these programs.

CEO has replicated its model with fidelity in sites across the country because we know it works. In 2004, CEO participated in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project. As part of this project, the independent evaluator MDRC conducted a three-year random assignment evaluation of CEO that also included a sophisticated benefit-cost analysis by the Vera Institute of Justice.

The evaluation of CEO was one of the most rigorous tests of an employment program for former prisoners in recent years. The three-year evaluation found that CEO significantly reduced recidivism.

The largest impacts occurred among former prisoners who enrolled shortly after release -- the core group of people targeted by CEO -- as well as those who were at a higher risk for recidivism. CEO substantially increased employment early in the study period, although several of the effects faded over time. A benefit-cost analysis in the study shows that CEO's benefits significantly outweighed its costs.

The study of 977 former prisoners used a random assignment design, comparing outcomes for individuals assigned to the program group, who were given access to CEO's services, with the outcomes of those assigned to the control group, who were offered basic job search assistance at CEO.

The Results: Program Impact

- CEO significantly reduced recidivism with the largest impacts for the group of participants recently released from prison. This group was significantly less likely than control group members to be arrested (49 percent, compared with 59 percent); convicted of a crime (44 percent, compared with 57 percent); or incarcerated (60 percent, compared with 71 percent). These impacts represent a reduction in recidivism of 16 to 22 percent across the three outcomes. Such reductions in recidivism are difficult to achieve and have rarely been seen in rigorous evaluations similar to this one.
- CEO's impacts were stronger for those who were more disadvantaged or at higher risk of recidivism. Among the subgroup with four or more prior convictions at the time of study, CEO reduced convictions for new crimes by 12.8 percentage points. For CEO participants without a high school diploma and for those considered to be at high risk of recidivism, there was a reduction in the number of days spent incarcerated. For those at high risk of recidivism, post-program (years 2-3) average quarterly unsubsidized employment increased by 11 percentage points (27 percent of program group members compared to 16 percent of the control group).
- First year improvements in employment outcomes were substantial (24.5 percentage points) driven by participation in transitional jobs, but the findings were not statistically significant in years 2 and 3 of the study. **At the time of the evaluation, CEO had only just begun its job retention program, a set of services to support participants on the job for one year. Over the last 9 years, CEO has doubled its internal 180- and 365-day job retention outcomes.** For the recently released

subgroup CEO had some positive impacts on other measures of post program employment.

- CEO's financial benefits far outweigh its costs. The total financial benefits of CEO were as high as \$3.85 for every \$1 invested in the program. Put another way, the total financial benefit equaled \$10,300 per person served. Over 80 percent of CEO's cost impacts were taxpayer benefits that came in the form of reduced criminal justice expenditures, primarily due to lower utilization in prison and jail beds. When viewed through the lens of taxpayer benefits only, the financial benefits of CEO were still as high as \$3.30 for every \$1 invested in the program, or \$8,300 in savings for every person served.

Expanding Evidence Based Practices within SNAP E&T

CEO began operating as a SNAP E&T partner in New York in 2009. In that time, we have served more than 1,600 individuals and leveraged nearly \$2 million dollars of 50/50 funding in New York state alone. Without this program CEO could not have provided services to many of these people. Our current FY17 New York SNAP E&T contract requires us to enroll 213 SNAP recipients annually - to date we have enrolled 513 and secured the full 50 percent portion of our match. That CEO has raised the resources to meet the matching requirement underscores the effectiveness of federal resources to leverage new funding to enhance service capacity.

CEO's experience as an E&T partner in New York led us to develop similar partnerships as we replicated CEO's program. Over the last ten years, CEO has expanded its program to Oklahoma, California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Colorado. Building upon our experience in New York, we worked with state leaders to build third-party partnerships and begin leveraging 50/50 funds.

CEO's expansion in Pennsylvania and Ohio represent good models for leveraging SNAP E&T dollars. In Pennsylvania, CEO established a strong partnership with the Department of Corrections to provide vocational services to men and women returning home to Philadelphia after their release from prison. The state was interested in replicating CEO's services in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg but could not cover the full costs for CEO. As we began exploring options for launching and sustaining these new sites we began working with Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (PADHS). They were interested in building a robust third-party partnership network to enhance the effectiveness of their SNAP E&T program. Building upon our experience in New York, CEO worked with PADHS to launch a 50/50 program in Pittsburgh in 2016, with programs coming online in

Harrisburg and Philadelphia later this year. CEO is leveraging earned income generated from our transitional jobs social enterprise and funding from the Pennsylvania Corrections Department to match the federal government's 50 percent funds. In all three locations, almost all CEO participants are eligible for SNAP benefits and will receive tailored employment services that they would not have received otherwise. If not for CEO's intervention, most of these individuals would remain unemployed and could quickly lose SNAP benefits given their inability to meet the work requirements.

CEO's expansion in Ohio offers a similar model. Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) was interested in CEO's expansion into Ohio to provide employment services to its returning citizen population. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) which administers the SNAP program was also interested in developing a statewide initiative targeted towards the formerly incarcerated. ODJFS had not yet implemented a statewide 50/50 funding E&T program but was encouraged based on USDA Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) outreach to states about establishing E&T programs. In the spring of 2017, ODJFS issued an RFP for a contractor to provide SNAP E&T services in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland with capacity to expand to additional cities in future years. CEO was awarded a \$1.5 million contract which provided the funding necessary to launch in all three cities and provide employment services to men and women recently released from prison.

Not only did the 50/50 funds enable CEO to bring its evidence-based program to Ohio, but we were also able to combine funding from several departments -- ODRC, ODJFS, and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) -- to provide a top-quality program that addressed two of the state's overarching objectives: reducing recidivism and poverty. Once all three CEO sites have launched we will serve approximately 300 people per year with plans to increase this capacity in future years.

CEO's partnership with SNAP E&T administrators has benefitted our participants greatly. Today, CEO has built the capacity to serve 1,250 participants annually in SNAP E&T programs and leverage \$2 million annually from 50/50 match funding. As importantly, we have developed a considerable amount of expertise about the program and have been able to work alongside our public partners to strengthen their programs. In addition to New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania CEO began operating as an E&T partner in Oklahoma this year and will begin new contracts in California and Colorado in FY18.

With continued funding for states that operate effective public-private partnership models, other non-profits can scale in a similar fashion and help state governments decrease their SNAP populations.

CEOis not a one-size-fits-all program however, and even as CEO continues to grow we can never meet the employment and training needs of all SNAP recipients. Therefore, we encourage our state partners to build relationships with other evidence-based community partners. By building robust networks of public-philanthropic-private partnerships states can provide specialized services for SNAP recipients.

Recommendations for the Committee

- **Continue to fund SNAP E&T and expand support for evidence based practices:** For more than 30 years the SNAP E&T program has provided critical support to individuals seeking employment and food assistance. These two needs, essential for maintaining economic security and family health, have been met through programs designed at the state level that meet local needs. We urge the Committee to continue funding for this program and add an additional \$100M for a new initiative allowing states to design programs that employ strategies that have been proven effective through rigorous evaluation to increase employment or reduce hunger and offer other positive societal benefits.
- **Maintain flexibility, while prioritizing evidence-based initiatives:** A hallmark and strength of the E&T program is the flexibility that states are given to administer programs responsive to local needs. Since its inception, most of SNAP E&T programs were comprised of job search activities and workfare components. A growing collection of literature shows that effective employment and training programs incorporate multiple, intensive training approaches for extended periods of time. We recommend maintaining the flexibility of 50/50 funds, while encouraging states and counties to innovate and use more intensive, evidence-based practices in the design of their SNAP E&T initiatives.
- **Evaluate, iterate, and improve:** The ten pilots authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill all

include rigorous evaluations. These evaluations will expand our knowledge of what practices work best for different SNAP recipients in different geographies. Given the diversity of SNAP recipients - working and non-working; rural and urban - we recommend continued support for evaluations of all kind (experimental and quasi-experimental) as well as better data collection to build a knowledge base that can improve employment and training services for SNAP recipients. It is also important that evaluations are considered one data point on a path of continuous learning. Evaluations should be used to strengthen and bolster the E&T program. Even when studies don't show dramatic impacts, we can learn from these findings and create stronger programs for the future.

- **Increase capacity for state and local governments:** CEO's experience has demonstrated that a diverse group of states has strong interest in expanding their SNAP E&T 50/50 initiatives. For some, the program design, technical requirements, and procurement have been a hurdle to reach implementation. We recommend that the next Farm Bill dedicates technical and financial support to states looking to expand their 50/50 programs using evidence-based approaches.
- **Recognize unique barriers of SNAP Recipients:** SNAP recipients face a range of barriers to entering the workforce and building economic security. Careful consideration of these barriers should be taken into account when establishing limits on SNAP participation. For example, many CEO participants who qualify as able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) could lose SNAP benefits if they exceed 3 months of unemployment in a 36-month period. Due to their status on community supervision (probation and parole) many cannot meet this employment threshold because of other obligations -- mandatory parole visits, court-ordered substance abuse counseling -- or limited job options due to lack of public transportation and suspended driver's licenses, among many other barriers. Given these and many other unique barriers we recommend revisiting certain work requirements that may hinder SNAP recipients' transition to financial stability.
- **Align SNAP E&T programs with other Workforce Programs:** SNAP E&T is one of the few employment and training program focused solely on lower skilled individuals. The

program's flexibility allows states to create effective employment and training programs that can help SNAP recipients build basic but essential work habits necessary for job retention. Many other workforce development systems such as WIOA offer critical workforce development services but can be difficult for SNAP recipients to access because of barriers to entry. We recommend that Congress include language in the 2018 Farm Bill that encourages SNAP Administrators to work with state Departments of Labor, State Workforce Boards, and other workforce entities to create a more seamless continuum of training that allows SNAP recipients to access higher-skilled workforce training after they complete E&T programs and are progressing in their careers.

- **Encourage public-private partnerships:** SNAP E&T programs utilizing public-private partnerships have shown positive results. Washington State's BFET program leverages collaborative partnerships with state, educational, and community agencies to provide services has helped thousands of citizens obtain and retain employment. We recommend including language in the 2018 Farm Bill to reward states for developing robust public-private partnership networks for employment services. This is similar to how the 2002 Farm Bill offered bonus grants for states demonstrating high program quality.
- **Create a SNAP E&T Data Warehouse:** As we continue to build our knowledge of what works in SNAP ET through impact evaluations, there is still more we can learn through collecting and disseminating output data and basic information on SNAP and SNAP E&T participants. FNS has done a great job with the content on their SNAP to Skills Portal and should continue to share data and content through these channels. There is still a lot more that states and providers can learn about the demographics and outcomes of SNAP E&T participants that can inform decision making on program design moving forward.