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Madam Chair Van Orden and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Raye Anderson, and I serve as the Advocacy Director for AARP Idaho. AARP represents more than 188,000 members across our state, advocating for policies that strengthen financial security, health, and independence for Idahoans age 50 and older.

AARP strongly supports efforts to ensure the integrity and accountability of public programs. Protecting taxpayer dollars and preventing fraud are important priorities that help maintain public confidence in programs designed to serve vulnerable populations.

At the same time, it is equally important that policies designed to strengthen oversight do not unintentionally create barriers for older Idahoans who rely on these programs to meet basic needs.

For many seniors living on fixed incomes, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical support. Rising costs for food, housing, utilities, and healthcare continue to put pressure on older adults' budgets. Even modest assistance can make a meaningful difference in whether someone can afford groceries at the end of the month.

Yet nationally, **nearly one in three eligible older adults does not participate in SNAP**. One of the primary reasons is administrative complexity: application requirements, documentation challenges, and verification processes that can be difficult to navigate, particularly for individuals with limited mobility, limited internet access, or health challenges.

Because of these realities, policies that add additional verification requirements must be implemented with great care. While well-intentioned, additional administrative hurdles can sometimes have the unintended consequence of discouraging eligible seniors from accessing assistance or delaying benefits they depend on for food security.

It is also important to recognize that fraud rates within the SNAP program are already very low. Federal oversight and existing verification processes have made SNAP one of the most rigorously monitored public benefit programs in the country. Strengthening integrity should therefore focus on targeted improvements without increasing barriers for eligible households.



AARP believes Idaho can pursue both goals, protecting program integrity while also protecting access for eligible residents.

To that end, we respectfully encourage consideration of safeguards that ensure:

- Verification systems are streamlined and accessible for older adults
- Reasonable timelines are provided for responding to documentation requests
- Benefits are not unnecessarily disrupted for individuals who remain eligible
- Additional administrative requirements do not discourage participation among eligible seniors

Food security is fundamental to health and independence. When older adults cannot reliably access nutritious food, it increases the risk of poor health outcomes, higher healthcare costs, and greater reliance on other public programs.

By ensuring that any new integrity measures are implemented thoughtfully and with attention to the needs of older Idahoans, this Legislature can strengthen both accountability and access.

AARP appreciates the committee's work on this issue and your continued commitment to supporting Idahoans as they age. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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