



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

September 2, 2025

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
U.S. House of Representatives
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson,

I am writing on behalf of Governor Shapiro to address your August 26 letter regarding Pennsylvania’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the impact H.R. 1 will have on Pennsylvania’s ability to administer the program.

Your letter outlines some concerns regarding how the Shapiro Administration and the Department of Human Services (DHS) operate our SNAP program. But you misstated key facts in your letter. Had you shared these misconceptions and properly consulted with my agency prior to passage of H.R. 1, perhaps SNAP could have been reformed in a way that would actually improve program integrity without kicking 144,000 Pennsylvanians off the program.

First, your letter is significantly focused on Pennsylvania’s “error rate.” While you claim Pennsylvania’s error rate is 11 percent, it is actually 10.76 percent, which places us below the national average of 10.93 percent. As you know, accuracy and specificity matter given how payment error rates are calculated and what it means for states.

I am proud of the substantial strides Pennsylvania has made over the last two years in lowering our error rate below the national average. In fact, last year, Pennsylvania was one of the most improved states in the country, reducing our error rate by an amount greater than 45 other states and territories.

My department is continuing to build on these improvements by taking targeted steps to further reduce Pennsylvania’s error rate. For example, some issues — like a missed signature or a case corrected during quality review — may not lead to an incorrect payment, but DHS is still required to report them in our error rate calculation. We are using both technology and manual checks to address the steps in our eligibility and processing procedures where errors are most likely to occur and correct those errors. My team looks forward to sharing more details on these efforts later this fall.

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Second, Pennsylvania is not the outlier you suggest. No neighboring state is significantly outperforming Pennsylvania. In fact, most of Pennsylvania's neighbors have higher error rates, as shown below:

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| ○ OH: 9.01% | ○ MD: 13.64% |
| ○ WV: 9.43% | ○ NY: 14.09% |
| ○ DE: 12.37% | ○ NJ: 14.33% |

Pennsylvania has historically been a leader in SNAP administration, and recent results demonstrate our commitment to further improvement.

Further, DHS has focused on helping Pennsylvanians feed their families by taking advantage of flexibilities within the SNAP program like waivers of community engagement reporting requirements and broad-based categorical eligibility. As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, it was within your purview to reduce or rescind these flexibilities.

It is disappointing that neither the Trump Administration nor the Republican majority in Congress share Pennsylvania's commitment to a well-run program that can serve those who most need it. Indeed, when presented with the opportunity to appropriate more funding to support states' administration of SNAP through budget reconciliation, Congress failed to do so.

Furthermore, DHS has not received any technical support from the Trump Administration. Typically, DHS has standing monthly calls with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) experts in both eligibility policy and quality control — regular calls that help states reduce their error rate and administer SNAP as efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, for the last three months, those calls have been cancelled. Further, many written requests for guidance or clarification to FNS now go completely unanswered.

As one of Pennsylvania's representatives in Congress — and the first Pennsylvanian to Chair the House Agriculture Committee in nearly 100 years — I ask for your assistance in getting USDA to resume their regular calls with DHS and respond to our inquiries in a timely manner. I am sure you would agree that USDA's experience and expertise is very valuable to our efforts to continue reducing Pennsylvania's error rate.

As leaders serving the people of Pennsylvania, I hope we can focus on the facts and avoid fearmongering tactics that do not serve the Commonwealth we both love. While it is undeniably true that your vote for the Republican budget bill jeopardizes reliable access to food for 144,000 Pennsylvanians and threatens a reliable revenue stream for farmers and grocers, my team is working around the clock to reduce our error rate and ensure as many Pennsylvania families as possible can continue to rely on SNAP.

My team and I stand ready to work with you to protect Pennsylvanian's access to this critical program — and we look forward to hearing from you on ways you can actually help us reduce our error rate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Arkoosh' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH
Secretary