

Linda provided her story below as written testimony to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research for a hearing on [SNAP And Other Nutrition Assistance In The Farm Bill](#).

At the time, some members of Congress had put forward legislation that would increase the number of adults who would be subject to SNAP time limits, including older adults and parents of children over age 9. Her story talks about how such proposals would increase hardship for families like hers.

Dear Sen. Fetterman,

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share my story with you.

I live with my family in Fayette County, in Spring Hill Township, on what used to be a farm, though it lost most of its value due to nearby fracking. We have a couple of horses, four chickens, and a garden. That garden, along with our food stamps, has been the only way we've been able to afford to eat in recent years.

I'm 53 (I turn 54 on Saturday) and I've never had much. My family moved up here from Virginia when I was in the fourth grade. My mom stayed at home, and my dad was a union worker. He traveled a lot for work. My mom was considered disabled and was sick most of the time.

I also would probably be considered disabled, though I never applied for benefits. I have a herniated disc, osteoarthritis in my back, and asthma. Because I have dyslexia and ADHD I didn't get to go beyond high school. My older son, Grant, is 27, and I have a son at home, Adam, who is 15. My husband, David, is a retired driver, and the three of us live on his Social Security benefits and a small retirement. He got a raise in his Social Security a few months ago and so his SNAP benefits went down. We lost the extra pandemic SNAP at the same time, so we're down to \$190/month for him, me, and our younger son.

With their help I grow food, which I can and freeze as much as possible; I try not to waste anything. We grow tomatoes, green beans, cucumber, peppers, watermelon, and cantaloupe. But the weather sometimes just doesn't cooperate. You could have a drought or like what happened last year – we have a peach tree and it started blooming, but then it froze, so we didn't have any peaches. My apple trees are blooming right now, but they might freeze. I don't use any herbicides or pesticides in my garden and last year I had a



Linda's Garden

huge infestation of every bug possible. Having those extra SNAP benefits during the pandemic saved us.

When I learned from Just Harvest (an anti-hunger organization in Allegheny County) about a Republican proposal to make it harder for me to keep SNAP, I was horrified. Because I'm not a senior and they consider me "able-bodied" and my son is older than 7, they want it so I would have to go get a part-time job of 20 hours/week or else my husband would have his food stamps cut.

The jobs I'm qualified for are physical jobs. What would it take for me to find a job if I have to tell an employer I can't lift or be on my feet for hours? If I did find work, it would be in Morgantown or Uniontown, which are 25 miles away. So that's 20 hours of work but then also a half hour each way. When they require 20 hours of work they aren't counting the cost of gas, the cost of maintaining the car, having oil changes, and having to go get special clothes.

And then we'd need two cars because if my child gets sick in school, they call you, they want you there. My family is gone, my parents and David's parents have passed so we don't have anyone to pick up our kid at school if he is sick. And this year was terrible with Adam; he's missed so much school. Whatever went through the school this year, he got. We got the flu, Covid, the head cold from hell – you name it, we got it. Then they wonder why people are having so many issues with their kids. I couldn't imagine Grant, my older child, being a latchkey kid, leaving him at 10 years old to his own demise. I couldn't imagine leaving either one of them at home -- for the child's own safety.

It's probably going to cost me more to work for those 20 hours than I'm going to make. And with whatever little money I earn they would probably throw me off of SNAP. It's hard enough as it is now when we're getting SNAP. We're just trying to find cheap food because the cost of food in the stores has nearly doubled. We've cut back our meals so we don't have two sides anymore, only one. We have a protein, like meat or fish, and then if we have a potato, for example, we won't have a salad or green beans. The nearest grocery store is 25 miles away so we plan our week: when we're going to town, what exactly we're going to get, and hopefully, we don't forget anything because you don't want to make that trip twice.

I pride myself on being able to stretch a dollar -- being able to plan my meals and eat well on a budget. But it is getting harder and harder to do that, almost impossible. If I lost SNAP due to these changes, we would have to choose and go without. Do you pay your water bill or your electric bills - or do I buy food? There are people who are worse off than me; I have the land, I can grow some food. Other people don't have that option. So we would be bad off if we lost the SNAP benefits, but others would be so much worse.

I hope you'll be able to stop this work requirement bill from passing.

Thank you for listening.

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