



## Farm Bill Update

*Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.*

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### What is the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill is a broad piece of legislation that authorizes federal programs affecting everything from farmers, to rural infrastructure, to agricultural research, to the federal government's most important anti-hunger program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Every five years, the Farm Bill expires and must be updated and passed by Congress.

### The Republican's 2018 Farm Bill

While Farm Bills are typically very bipartisan, 2018 Farm Bill was written by Republicans behind closed doors and makes heartless changes to SNAP that will take food off the tables of thousands of veterans, seniors, children and other vulnerable Americans.

Despite passionate opposition from Congresswoman Adams and the other Democrats on the House Committee on Agriculture, this partisan Farm Bill passed the Committee by a 26-20 vote along party lines. The 2018 Farm Bill will now move to the entire House of Representatives for a vote.

### Impact on Hunger in Mecklenburg County & North Carolina

Here in Mecklenburg County, over 162,000 people are considered food insecure. Worse, almost 50,000 of those are children who risk going to bed hungry every night. Additionally, in Mecklenburg **more than 55,000 households depend on SNAP to feed their families**, so cuts to the program will be incredibly harmful to our community.

The 2018 Farm Bill makes severe cuts to SNAP that will directly impact hungry North Carolinians:

- This bill would cut more than **\$23 billion dollars** in SNAP benefits over the next 10 years – that's \$23 billion dollars of food taken off the tables of low-income Americans who just need a little help.
- The bill's changes to SNAP would take away or cut benefits from an estimated **2 million people** in this country and cause an estimated **265,000 children to lose free/reduced school meals**.
- Based off analysis of a similar state-level bill last year, our state estimated that about **130,000 North Carolinians, including 40,000 to 50,000 children**, will lose SNAP benefits under the 2018 Farm Bill.

### Next steps

#### *House of Representatives*

- The 2018 Farm Bill is expected to come to the House floor for a vote the week of May 14th.
- Speaker Paul Ryan considers this bill a part of his "welfare reform" legacy and will work hard to pass it.

#### *Senate*

- The Senate is still drafting their Farm Bill in a bipartisan manner and will likely release text in 2-4 weeks.
- The Senate's Farm Bill is not expected to make major changes to SNAP.



## Education Update

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### **Elementary and Secondary Education (K-12)**

**Every Student Succeeds Act:** Our nation's policy toward K-12 education is shaped primarily through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In 2015, Congress passed the most-recent version of the ESEA – The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The bill is an update from the last version of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act, which imposed cookie-cutter federal solutions that prioritized teaching to standardized tests above all else. The newer version, ESSA, reduces the testing burden, and increases access to high-quality preschool programs which will prepare children for the classroom. Additionally, ESSA ensures that state education programs address the achievement gaps of underserved students, specifically students of color and low-income students. I supported the ESSA when it became law with bipartisan support in 2015.

**Concerns with Enforcement of ESSA:** The Trump Administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) calls for a \$1.1 billion to fund vouchers for private schools. Numerous studies have shown that voucher programs do not enhance student achievement and can take money away from already underfunded schools. Additionally, the Trump Administration has approved numerous state plans that do not include standards to measure the achievement of underserved students. These actions go against the standards set by the ESSA. Congress must act to enforce the law and ensure all students have access to a quality public education.

### **Higher Education**

**PROSPER Act:** In December, Republicans on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce marked-up and passed on a party-line vote the PROSPER Act, their version of Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization. The PROSPER Act would:

- Make college more expensive for low-income students and reward low-quality for-profit programs with unprecedented access to federal taxpayer dollars.
- Create a two-track U.S. higher education system divided by income: college for all who can afford it, and low quality job training and work-based instruction for those who cannot afford a four-year degree.
- Simplify federal student aid by reducing investment, limiting loan repayment options, and eliminating benefits for the lowest-income students.
- Eliminate all federal funding for teacher education programs.
- Do nothing to improve student supports for vulnerable student populations.





## Bipartisan HBCU Caucus Update

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In April, 2015 Congresswoman Adams founded the first ever Bipartisan Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Caucus to advocate for HBCUs and the students they serve.

**What:** The Bipartisan HBCU Caucus (Caucus) works to promote and protect the interest of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) by creating a national dialogue, educating key public and private sector stakeholders about the issues impacting HBCUs, drafting meaningful, bipartisan legislation to address the needs of HBCUs, and supporting students and graduates of HBCUs by increasing access and career opportunities.

**How:** HBCU Caucus members meet regularly with key stakeholders to discuss issues pertinent to HBCUs.

**Why:** HBCUs educate and employ many of our constituents. They provide a vital opportunity for students that may not have otherwise pursued higher education. Despite their significant contributions, many HBCUs face serious challenges. The Caucus will convene to discuss the challenges impacting HBCUs and create meaningful policies and legislation to address them.

### Highlights

- The Bipartisan HBCU Caucus celebrated its third anniversary on April 28, 2018.
- The Caucus is bicameral and bipartisan, with 75 total members.
- Caucus members have hosted meetings that explore hardships that HBCUs face, public-private partnerships available to HBCUs, internship and workforce development opportunities for HBCU graduates, and federal resources for HBCUs.
- In 2016, the Caucus started the Bipartisan HBCU Caucus Internship that provided HBCU students with a unique opportunity to gain valuable, hands on experience while learning about the functions of a Congressional office from the perspectives of both a Democrat and a Republican member of Congress.
- In September of 2017 the Caucus launched the HBCU Partnership Challenge. The Challenge encourages private entities to invest and engage in HBCUs and the students they serve. Intel and Lyft were the first corporations to take the Challenge.





## Small Business Update

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Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. In North Carolina alone, small businesses employ **1.6 million people**— that's **44.3% percent** of the private workforce. Between 1995 to 2013, small business generated **85% of new jobs in North Carolina**. Small businesses make up **99.6 percent** of all North Carolina businesses.

### Small Business Committee

Small Business Committee Democrats continue to advocate for small businesses.

- During the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Small Business Committee has had over 20 hearings and dozens of roundtables. The topics of consideration included: taxes, trade, venture capital, minority contractors, advanced small businesses, LGBT small businesses, agriculture, and veterans.

Despite the DC gridlock, the Small Business Committee has advanced meaningful legislation to help small businesses.

- The House of Representatives passed my *SCORE for Small Business Act of 2017* last year. SCORE is the largest federal business mentoring program to help Americans start and grow their small businesses.
- The Small Business Committee also completed consideration of six bipartisan small business bills. The bills' topics ranged from cybersecurity, reforming lending programs, to intellectual property.

### Vice Ranking Member of Small Business Committee

As the Vice Ranking Member of the Small Business Committee, I work hard each day to ensure small business owners have the resources their businesses need to thrive.

- Last year, I introduced the *Veterans Small Business Tax Credit Act*, which helps relieve the financial burden of starting a small business on our nation's veterans by establishing a new tax credit.
- More recently, I introduced the *Women Small Business Growth Act* to help women-owned businesses by forgiving 15% of a women small business owner's student debt on her third and fourth year of being in business. Also, my bill forgives an additional 20% of a women small business owner's student debt for each job she creates with a salary of at least \$30,000. This will help women maintain access to their own capital and create new jobs in our community.
- In February, I asked the Government Accountability Office to investigate whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities are receiving adequate support from the Small Business Administration to help develop successful entrepreneurs.



## Differed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Update

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### **What is DACA?**

In 2012, President Obama announced the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA allows young unauthorized immigrants who meet certain criteria to apply for a commitment from the federal government for "deferred action" — that is, a commitment not to initiate deportation proceedings — for two years. Successful applicants also receive a work permit.

To be eligible for DACA, a recipient must have been under age 16 at the time of entry into the US and have been under age 31 on June 15, 2012, arrived in the US before 2007, be enrolled in school or have a degree, and not have a significant criminal record.

In September 2017, the Trump Administration announced that the DACA program would be phased out over a six-month period. Fifteen states (including North Carolina) and the District of Columbia filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District of New York challenging the Trump Administration's decision to wind down the DACA program. Specifically, the plaintiffs allege that the decision violates the Administrative Procedure Act because it is "arbitrary and capricious," and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not go through the notice and comment procedures for proposed rulemaking before it made its decision.

### **Renewing Permits**

In January, several federal court decisions were issued that required DHS to process DACA renewal applications again. This means that any DACA recipients whose DACA permits expired, or are about to expire, will be able to apply for renewals — and those renewals should be processed and granted normally.

### **April Court Ruling**

In April, a federal district court ruled that the Trump administration must allow immigrants who qualify for DACA to apply for work permits even if they never applied before September 2017. However, the court's ruling doesn't go into effect for 90 days. The district court gave the 90-day wait period to give DHS "an opportunity to better explain its rescission decision." If DHS does not supply new reasoning that adequately justifies, in the district court's opinion, ending DACA—the order will require DHS to process both new and renewal applications going forward.

If the 90-day period passes without the Trump Administration providing adequate reasoning for ending DACA, the court ruling will go into effect and people who qualified for DACA but didn't apply for it will have the opportunity to apply for a two-year work permit for the first time.

Still, as these court rulings show, DREAMers need support and families cannot live under the constant threat of deportation. It is imperative, now more than ever, that Congress pass the DREAM Act that protects these young and hard-working Americans.