

**House Committee on Agriculture
Member Day Hearing
Congressman Shomari Figures (AL-02)
Wednesday, December 10, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig, for holding this Member Day hearing and allowing us the opportunity to testify.

Many of you may not know this, but I represent Alabama's 2nd District where the plight of our farmers and the needs of rural communities are not abstract Washington talking points. For my community, agriculture issues are our daily reality.

From the soybean farmers of Macon County to families in Washington County – agriculture and the work of this Committee has real life ramifications on my neighbors across the Second District.

Historically, this Committee has met those needs with a spirit of bipartisanship that puts the needs of rural America first. And I believe that commitment matters more now than ever. Let's start with SNAP. Earlier this year, we witnessed the largest SNAP cut in the history of this country by the Trump Administration. To add insult to injury, millions of Americans – including around 29,000 people in my District who rely on SNAP – were denied their benefits by a heartless Administration that was willing to break the law to withhold SNAP benefits and cause children, seniors, people with disabilities, and millions of families go hungry during the Thanksgiving holiday season.

This Committee knows all too well that if SNAP benefits falter or if states cannot meet their cost sharing requirements to fund the program, our constituents – the people who entrusted us to advocate on their behalf in Washington -- are the ones who suffer.

In Alabama's 2nd District, that is one in four households going hungry. In my community, letting SNAP falter means losing nearly 500 jobs across sectors. Without SNAP, every food pantry would be overwhelmed because SNAP generates nine meals for every one meal offered by a local charity.

As the Vice Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Nutrition and as one of only two members from the state of Alabama serving on this Committee – strengthening SNAP remains at the forefront of all that I do on this Committee, and I call upon my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to ensure that this lifeline is restored for the most vulnerable in this country.

We also know that rising costs are keeping many Americans up at night. I represent a community where the median individual income is just north of \$32,000, so even the smallest rise in the cost of putting food on the table or raising crops or energy prices can cause irreparable harm.

That's why the President's tariff war and market instability has been concerning for the people of Alabama – particularly our small and midsize farmers who are not receiving the support and relief funding they need from the federal government to weather this storm. Relief checks for some when farmers are experiencing billions of dollars in losses is not only disappointing but borders flat out irresponsible. We need stronger risk-management tools, meaningful disaster assistance, and fair access to USDA programs—especially for farmers who have historically faced discrimination in lending and program eligibility. And we must strengthen the connection between local producers and local communities so that food grown in Alabama fills the cafeterias in our schools, the shelves of our neighborhood stores, and the tables of families using SNAP. That is what keeps dollars circulating locally and gives our next generation of farmers a real chance to succeed.

Everyone here knows that we're long overdue to pass a new, comprehensive Farm Bill that delivers real, tangible progress for rural families. A new Farm Bill is our opportunity to reach bipartisan consensus and tackle our major priorities including:

- supporting beginning farmers
- expanding agricultural research at HBCUs like Tuskegee University
- modernizing SNAP
- strengthening crop insurance,
- ensuring that our rural communities have the housing, infrastructure, and economic tools they need to thrive.

We cannot keep shifting resources from one critical program to make up for cuts in another. We cannot “rob Peter to pay Paul” and call it a strategy.

A strong farm bill means farmers can hold onto their land. It means more than 10,000 Alabamians avoid falling into poverty. It means our food supply chain, from the field to the grocery aisle, remains stable and secure. And it means we keep faith with the communities that feed and fuel this nation.

I'll end with this: as a proud father of four young children and a son of rural Alabama, I can't help but think about the opportunities children have, or don't have, simply because of where they grow up. In my District, a student may not have access to reliable broadband to complete their homework. That child may grow into a young adult who fears that the only path to a good job requires leaving home altogether. Throughout that child's life, they may be forced to drive an hour just to receive quality and comprehensive health care. This isn't hypothetical – it's the reality for far too many in rural America.

It's time to put our money where our mouths are and invest in the broadband, distance learning, and telemedicine that is required for rural communities to compete in a modern economy. These are exactly the challenges USDA's Rural Development Program was designed to confront, and they are why we must strengthen these programs. I am hopeful that this committee can once again rise to the moment and deliver bipartisan solutions that put families, farmers, and rural America first.

Thank you, and I yield back.