

Written Testimony
Representative Kim Schrier (WA-08)

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House Committee on Agriculture
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Thank you, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig, for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Over the past year, our constituents have had their food assistance stripped away from them. Working people are struggling with rising costs, producers and consumers are dealing with the uncertainty of tariffs, and we are leaving our farmers behind. Today's Member Day could not be timelier.

The government shutdown highlighted just how important SNAP is for my district. While people were working without pay and their SNAP benefits were delayed, food banks were overrun, and my own constituents reached out to see how they could help and make up the difference. Earlier this year, House Republicans made it even harder to access SNAP benefits. Food is not a luxury, it is a necessity, and we should be striving to ensure everyone has food on their table, not increasing barriers for those struggling to feed themselves and their families.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC, is another program that needs our continued investment. WIC is an effective intervention to support positive pregnancy and birth outcomes and healthy child development —WIC saves lives.

Studies have shown that WIC reduces the risk of preterm birth and infant mortality, reduces the prevalence of childhood obesity, and saves significant healthcare costs, which at a time when my constituents are forced to spend thousands more on healthcare coverage or go without coverage altogether, could not be more imperative.

We must also invest in community resources, like our food banks, that provide support during times of crisis. The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, offers this support while investing in our agricultural economy. My bill, the *EAT Healthy Foods from Local Farmers Act*, takes this one step further by allowing states to use TEFAP to purchase locally grown food from small and beginning farmers and distribute it to food banks and other emergency food organizations. This bill would also fill a gap left by the Local Food Purchase Assistance program, which was hastily cancelled by the Trump Administration earlier this year. I will be reintroducing the *EAT Healthy Foods from Local Farmers Act* this week, and I urge the Committee to prioritize it and other ways to invest in family farms.

Rising costs are not only impacting consumers – they are lowering profits for our producers. This administration's tariffs have increased infrastructure costs and risked farmers' opportunity to compete fairly in the global market. It took over two years to convince India to drop their retaliatory tariffs on Washington apples following President Trump's 2018 tariffs which precipitated a 99% drop in those apple exports. We cannot afford to spend years cleaning up this new tariff mess while our local economies continue to struggle to pay Trump's tab. I introduced the *Agriculture Export Promotion Act* to increase funding to USDA export promotion programs like the Market Access Program to give farmers who export their crops a fighting chance in this Trump economy.

My district is home to apples and a variety of other specialty crops, and I will continue to focus on expanding specialty crop research and extension services. I introduced bipartisan legislation to waive the prohibitive matching funds requirement for federal specialty crop research funding. This allows our agriculture research institutions to more readily invest in projects to combat fungicide resistance in wine grapes, prevent pestilence in onions, and improve precision irrigation for fruit growers, among a variety of other issues that impact specialty crop growers.

Finally, we need to support a resilient agricultural system and ensure that farmers and producers can invest in climate-smart practices. My bill, the *Partnerships for Agriculture Climate Action Act*, allows farmers to choose to implement practices that reduce emissions, enhance soil carbon storage, and improve resilience to extreme weather. It is modeled after a bipartisan Washington State program and supports first-time, low-income, and minority farmers that don't traditionally have the capital to invest in these practices. I also introduced the bipartisan *ENABLE Conservation Act*, which expands the Conservation Reserve Program county acreage cap so that more farmers can choose to restore their land and protect it for future generations. All US conservation programs are over-subscribed, and I urge the Committee to prioritize both pieces of legislation so that farmers can continue to reliably provide for their families and the country amidst climate change and increasingly severe weather conditions.

I look forward to working with the Committee to advance these priorities and pieces of legislation. Thank you for your time.