

March 25, 2014

The Honorable **FIRST LAST**
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC **ZIP**

Dear **SENATOR/CONGRESSMAN LAST**:

As Congress begins work on Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations, we strongly urge you to fully fund federal nutrition programs. Together, hunger and obesity pose two of the greatest health challenges of our time, both the consequence of inadequate nutrition. Nearly 50 million people live in households that struggle to put food on the table, placing millions of families at risk of hunger and poor nutrition. The long-term consequences are significant, both for individuals and our society as a whole. Food insecurity and poor nutrition reduce health and educational outcomes, decrease workforce productivity, and increase education and health care costs. Even as the economy strengthens, millions of families have been left behind in the economic recovery, with weak job growth and low wages causing the need for food assistance to remain high.

Fortunately, federal nutrition programs are an effective preventative investment that operate in communities across the country to protect against hunger, improve nutrition, and promote health. Programs are specifically targeted at vulnerable children, seniors, and low-income households to provide the nutrition they need. We urge you to adopt the following funding levels in Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations:

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP helps to put food on the table for about 47 million people each month. SNAP participation closely follows changes in unemployment and underemployment and so is responsive to changes in need. Benefits are targeted at the most vulnerable. The average household has an income of less than 60% of the federal poverty guideline and 82% of all benefits go to households with a child, senior, or disabled person.

- **Support SNAP** as it continues to respond to the elevated need for food assistance with timely benefits.
- **Provide \$5 billion for the SNAP reserve fund.**

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC serves low-income women and young children to age five, providing them with a nutritious monthly food package, nutrition education, healthcare and social service referrals to ensure that this at-risk population receives the quality nutrition and healthcare essential for healthy growth and development.

- **Fund WIC at \$6.823 billion** to support a projected caseload of 8.7 million participants. Monitor food inflation and caseload to ensure that funding meets anticipated need. **Provide \$150 million to replenish the WIC Contingency Fund** for unforeseen food cost or participation increases.
- **Safeguard program integrity** and protect WIC from harmful policy changes.
- **Provide \$60 million for breastfeeding peer counselors** to improve breastfeeding initiation and duration, **\$30 million for Management Information Systems/Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)** funding to improve client access, retailer efficiency, and program integrity, **\$14 million for infrastructure improvements**, and **\$5 million for program research and evaluation.**

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP ensures a steady stream of nutritious USDA commodities for distribution through our nation's charitable food system, delivering some of the most nutrient-rich food that food banks distribute through pantries, shelters, and kitchens and providing support for storage and distribution.

- **Provide the authorized funding level of \$100 million for TEFAP storage and distribution funds.** The current funding level of \$49 million only covers 33% of the cost of distributing TEFAP commodities.

- **Fund TEFAP commodities at \$324 million**, as provided by the 2014 farm bill. TEFAP commodities are distributed to low-income people through food banks, pantries, kitchens and shelters.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

CSFP provides a nutritious monthly food package to approximately 580,000 low-income participants, primarily low-income seniors. The CSFP food package is designed to meet the specific nutritional needs of the target population, combating the poor health conditions often found in food insecure seniors.

- **Fund CSFP at \$208.7 million**, the amount necessary to maintain current caseload.
- **Provide an additional \$5 million allow CSFP to serve the six additional states** with USDA approved state plans (CT, HI, ID, MD, MA, RI).

Child Nutrition Programs

Child nutrition programs operate in school, daycare, after school, and summer settings, providing nutritious meals and snacks to fuel children with the energy they need to thrive in the classroom and on the playground.

- **Support the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program** to provide children with nutritious meals and snacks.
- **Provide \$35 million for school meal equipment grants** to help schools upgrade their kitchen equipment to help schools serve healthier meals and expand access to feeding programs.

Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed)

SNAP-Ed provides comprehensive nutrition education that helps low-income children and adults develop knowledge and skills to find, buy and prepare healthy foods on limited budgets.

- **Fund SNAP-Ed at \$407 million**, as mandated in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

Additional Nutrition Programs Funded Through Agriculture Appropriations

- **Provide \$17 million for WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)**, to provide vouchers to low-income women, infants, and children.
- **Provide \$21 million for the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**, which provides vouchers for low-income seniors.
- **Provide \$3 million for the Congressional Hunger Center** for the operation of the Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowships and Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellowships, which focus on developing solutions to hunger based on experience at local field placements and national and international policy organizations.
- **Provide \$9 million for Community Food Projects** to meet food needs of low-income people, increase community self-reliance, and promote comprehensive responses to food, farm and nutrition issues.

Nutrition Programs Funded Through Other Appropriations Subcommittees

- **Provide \$440.8 million for senior congregate nutrition services** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$217.7 million for senior home-delivered nutrition services** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$161 million for senior nutrition services incentive program** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$48 million for Healthy Food Financing Initiative**, \$35 million in the Financial Services Appropriations bill and \$13 million in the Agriculture Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$200 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program** in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

We strongly urge you to fully support federal nutrition programs in FY2015 appropriations so they may work as intended to protect against hunger and promote nutritious, balanced diets for vulnerable populations.

9to5

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Alliance to End Hunger

American Commodity Distribution Association

American Heart Association

American Psychological Association

American Public Health Association

B'nai B'rith International

Bread for the World

Coalition on Human Needs

Community Action Partnership

Congressional Hunger Center

Direct Care Alliance

Ecumenical Poverty Initiative (formerly the National Council of Churches' Poverty Initiative)

Fair Food Network

Feeding America

First Focus Campaign for Children

Focus: HOPE

Food Research and Action Center

The Food Trust

Generations United

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Lutheran Services in America

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Meals On Wheels Association of America

MomsRising

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

National Association of RSVP Directors

National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)

National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.

National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Associations (NCSFPA)

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council on Aging

National Education Association

National Farm to School Network

National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)

National Immigration Law Center

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

National WIC Association

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

OWL-The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

PolicyLink

Promise the Children

Public Health Institute

RESULTS

Share Our Strength

Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior

The Society of St. Andrew

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Union for Reform Judaism

United Way Worldwide

Wholesome Wave

WhyHunger