

November 12, 2013

Dear Farm Bill Conferees:

We are writing to underscore how fundamentally important it is to protect and support the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to oppose SNAP cuts in any Farm Bill Conference Report. If SNAP is weakened, our nation will have more hunger and food insecurity, worse educational outcomes, worse health, and higher health costs.

SNAP matters to neighbors in every community in the country. It serves children, seniors, those who are looking for work, those working at low wages, persons whose lives have been impacted by natural disasters, veterans and active duty military. It serves very vulnerable people. Indeed, 83 percent of SNAP benefits go to households with children, elderly persons or persons with disabilities.

SNAP benefits are meager – they now average a mere \$1.40 per person per meal. Each SNAP household's monthly SNAP allotment has gone down at least 5.5% as the temporary increase in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was terminated pursuant to 2010 enactments. For example, a household of three now gets \$29 less in SNAP benefits per month compared to prior months. In FY 2014 alone, this cut to SNAP benefits will total \$5 billion and \$11 billion over the next three years.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has provided estimates of the impact of Farm Bill proposals on participants, including the number of SNAP participants that would lose SNAP eligibility, the number of SNAP children who would lose access to free school meals, and the number of SNAP households that would have their monthly benefits cut. Those CBO estimates belie any assertion that proposed SNAP cuts are not cuts to the food in needy people's cupboards and refrigerators. Make no mistake – proposed SNAP cuts mean taking desperately needed food away from vulnerable people.

While charities provide an important supplement to federal nutrition programs, they are not a replacement for a strong Federal safety net. Food banks and other charities can't make up for lost SNAP benefits. Federal nutrition programs deliver 23 times the amount of food assistance provided by private charities. In fact, the SNAP meals that would be lost in 2014 from the ARRA cuts and the proposed farm bill cuts would exceed the total annual meal distribution by the Feeding America network of food banks around the country. Food banks and pantries, churches, synagogues, and mosques and other charitable food providers are already struggling to meet tremendous need in their communities and cannot fill the gap created by cuts to SNAP eligibility and benefits.

Nearly 49 million Americans live in households that are food insecure. Too often they are forced to choose between paying for food or rent, medicine, shoes for the children or heat – choices no family should have to make. SNAP is an important means of lessening those incredibly difficult choices. Congress should be strengthening, not weakening SNAP. We urge you to reject Farm Bill SNAP cuts.

Sincerely,

9 to 5 National Association of Working Women
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
AFL-CIO
Afterschool Alliance
AIDS United
Alliance for a Just Society
Alliance for Children and Families
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alliance to End Hunger
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Commodity Distribution Association
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee
Americans for Democratic Action
The Arc of the United States
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters
Bread for the World
Campaign for Community Change
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Law and Social Policy
Child Care Food Program Roundtable
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Leadership Council
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Action Partnership
Community Development Resource Consortium
Congressional Hunger Center
Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED)
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
Direct Care Alliance
Dominican Sisters of Peace
Easter Seals
The Education Trust
Environmental Working Group
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Every Child Matters
Families USA
Family Promise
Feeding America
Fellowship of Reconciliation

First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research and Action Center
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Generations United
Half in Ten
Health Care for America Now
Healthy Teen Network
Hip Hop Caucus
Housing Works
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
The Jewish Federation of North America
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters of the U.S.
LEAnet, a national association of local education agencies
Legal Momentum
Lutheran Services in America
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Meals On Wheels Association of America
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Child Development Institute
National CACFP Sponsors Association
The National CACFP Sponsors Forum
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council on Aging
National Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) Association
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Foundation to End Senior Hunger
National Head Start Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Human Services Assembly
National Immigration Law Center
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Skills Coalition
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OWL-The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Parents As Teachers
Peace Action
PolicyLink
Preservation of Affordable Housing
Promise the Children
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
School Food FOCUS National Office
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Share Our Strength
Sisters of Mercy, Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
SocioEnergetics Foundation
Sojourners
Trust for America's Health
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)
United Way Worldwide
US Conference of Mayors
USAction
Wholesome Wave
Why Hunger
Wider Opportunities for Women
The Workmen's Circle
YMCA of the USA