

March 23, 2015

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 2016 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. Even as the economy strengthens, the need for food assistance remains high. Nearly forty-nine million people live in households that struggle to put food on the table, placing millions of families at risk of hunger and poor nutrition. Food insecurity and poor nutrition reduce health and educational outcomes, decrease workforce productivity, and increase education and health care costs.

Meeting the need for food assistance is especially critical for our most vulnerable citizens – pregnant and nursing women, infants, children, and seniors – for whom the consequences of hunger and poor nutrition are more severe. Fortunately, the 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. And because struggling families often turn to local charities as the first line of assistance when they fall on hard times, it is critical that we maintain support for the emergency food system.

We are deeply concerned about the impact that the sequester and across the board spending cuts have had on discretionary nutrition programs, like WIC and Older Americans Act senior nutrition programs. These disruptions are unnecessary and put our most vulnerable children, seniors, and families at greater risk of hunger and poor nutrition. We urge you to protect these programs from sequester and across the board cuts in Fiscal Year 2016, support nutrition programs during the budget reconciliation process, and adopt the following funding levels in Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations:

#### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

*SNAP helps to put food on the table for about 46 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.**
- **Provide \$1.5 million for the SNAP Employment and Training Center for Excellence** to share proven strategies for connecting SNAP recipients to work.

- **Provide \$25 million in grants to states to help bolster employment and training programs for able-bodied adults** without dependents subject to the 3 month SNAP participation limit.
- **Provide \$9 million to create a new state option to improve SNAP access for seniors.** Based on successful state demonstrations in increasing senior participation in SNAP, this would allow states to adopt a set of policies to streamline and simplify the SNAP application, reporting requirements, and recertifications for seniors.

### **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, breastfeeding education and support, and 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 \$6.684 billion** to support a projected caseload of 8.5 million participants. Monitor food inflation and caseload to ensure that funding meets anticipated need. This includes: **\$90 million for breastfeeding peer counselors** to improve breastfeeding initiation and duration, **\$30 million for Management Information Systems and \$50 million for 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 and 6 million for enhanced fruit and vegetable cash value vouchers for fully breastfeeding women.**
- Assure that the **WIC Contingency Fund is maintained and adequately funded to \$150 million** for unforeseen food cost or participation increases.
- **Safeguard program integrity** and protect WIC from harmful policy changes.

### **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 \$67 million to continue the summer demonstration projects** that provide monthly food assistance to low-income children in the summer via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card.
- **Provide \$35 million for school meal equipment grants** that upgrade school kitchen equipment which helps serve healthier meals and expand access to feeding programs.

### **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 21.9% of the cost of distributing TEFAP commodities.

- **Fund TEFAP commodities at \$320 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 604,000 low-income participants, including in seven new states – Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island - that are currently beginning services. 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 \$221,298,000**, the amount necessary to maintain current caseload and to provide 10,000 additional caseload slots anticipated to focus on the seven new states.

#### **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 \$411 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.
- **Provide \$2 million for a new nutrition education Center for Excellence** to promote innovation and education and obesity prevention.

#### **Nutrition Programs Funded Through Other Appropriations Subcommittees**

- **Provide \$458 million for Older Americans Act (OAA) senior congregate nutrition services** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$236 million for OAA senior home-delivered nutrition services** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$161 million for OAA senior nutrition services incentive program** in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$20 million for an OAA nutrition demonstration grant program** that would invest in evidence-based models to modernize the home-delivered and congregate nutrition programs.
- **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 FY2016 appropriations so they may work as intended to protect against hunger and promote nutritious, balanced diets for vulnerable populations.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Age Well Senior Services Inc  
AIDS Services Foundation Orange County  
Alliance to End Hunger  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Agri-Women  
American Commodity Distribution Association  
American Society on Aging  
Bread for the World  
Community Servings of Boston  
Congressional Hunger Center  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative (formerly the National Council of Churches' Poverty Initiative)  
Fair Food Network  
Feed the Children  
Feeding America  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Food & Friends  
Food and Research Action Center  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Justice in Aging  
Lutheran Services in America  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Meals on Wheels America  
MomsRising  
Moveable Feast Baltimore, MD  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
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 Social Workers (NASW)  
National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council on Aging  
Orange County HIV/AIDS Advocacy Team  
RESULTS  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
Share Our Strength  
The Food Trust

The Salvation Army  
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Way Worldwide  
Wholesome Wave  
WhyHunger  
YMCA of the USA