

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