



April 6th, 2012

Dear Members of Congress:

As members of Feeding America's national network of over 200 food banks, we urge you to protect and strengthen federal nutrition programs during the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization.

Food banks are on the front lines of our nation's fight against hunger. We see every day how important federal nutrition programs are in our community and how effectively they are working to ensure that struggling Americans can provide enough food for their families. One in eight people receives food assistance each year through Feeding America food banks. Our network supports over 61,000 local pantries, kitchens and shelters, 55 percent of which are faith-based. Together we serve 37 million Americans across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

With unemployment still stuck over 8 percent nationally, millions of families are out of work or have been forced to accept fewer hours or a lower salary than they had before the recession began. Nationally, our network experienced a 46 percent increase in clients from 2006 to 2010. Jobs and economic opportunity are the best solution to hunger and poverty, but for far too many Americans, jobs and opportunity are out of reach, and we need to ensure that struggling families can still put food on the table. Farm Bill nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) are targeted at our most vulnerable, providing a critical safety net for the poorest Americans.

SNAP has responded effectively to the 94 percent increase in unemployment from 2007 to 2011 with a 70 percent increase in participation over the same period. SNAP benefits are targeted at our most vulnerable. Nationally, 76 percent of SNAP households included a child, senior, or disabled person, and 85 percent of SNAP households have gross income at or below 100 percent of the poverty line. SNAP expands in hard times, helping families buy groceries, and freeing up resources for other needs like rent, utilities, and transportation.

But while SNAP is growing as intended to meet increased need, TEFAP, which provides an average of 25 percent of the food distributed by our food banks, has not kept pace with growing demand. In fact, TEFAP commodity support actually dropped 30 percent in 2011 even as food banks continue to experience the greatest need they have ever seen. Unlike SNAP, mandatory TEFAP is not counter-cyclical and does not automatically grow when need grows. Furthermore, TEFAP bonus commodity purchases are tied to agricultural markets, not food insecurity, and strong agricultural markets resulted in fewer bonus TEFAP purchases in 2010 and 2011. Additional TEFAP support is urgently needed to ensure that food banks can continue serving their communities.

Food banks serve many families who are not income-eligible for SNAP but who still struggle to put food on the table. We are also serving families whose SNAP benefits are inadequate to last through the month.

On average SNAP only allows \$1.50 per person per meal, and 90 percent of benefits are exhausted

by the third week of the month. Any cuts to SNAP benefits or eligibility would only increase the overwhelming need food banks already seeing, including the cut to SNAP benefit levels scheduled to go into effect next year. The 2010 child nutrition bill was partially paid for by terminating early the temporary boost to SNAP benefit levels provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), presenting families with a sharp drop in monthly benefit levels in November 2013.

Federal nutrition programs not only provide immediate relief for struggling families, children, and seniors, they also yield significant dividends for America's farmers and the agricultural industry. Both TEFAP and CSFP provide only American-produced commodities, providing a strong impact on the farm economy. For example, bonus TEFAP commodities (those purchased by USDA to intervene in weak agricultural markets) provide an estimated 85 cents per dollar of Federal expenditure to commodity producers, and producers receive about 27 cents of each dollar spent on TEFAP mandatory commodities (those purchased at the funding level set by the farm bill). Each dollar spent on SNAP benefits results in \$1.79 in economic activity along the farm to fork continuum, and about 16 cents of each retail food dollar goes to farmers.

We recognize the challenge you face in drafting a Farm Bill in a time of deficit reduction, but we are faced every day with the tremendous, ongoing need in communities in every state across the country. We are confident that even in a time of limited resources, our nation can make decisions that reflect our shared value of helping our neighbors in need and urge you to protect and strengthen TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP. With that, we offer the following priorities for the Farm Bill:

- Increase funding for mandatory TEFAP to better reflect the need for emergency food assistance.
- Set aside a portion of the specialty crop purchase requirement to go specifically to food banks.
- Clarify USDA's authority to make TEFAP bonus purchases when the need for food assistance is high, not only when agriculture markets are weak, so the program is responsive to both excess supply and heightened need.
- Protect SNAP funding, benefit levels, and eligibility rules and reject harmful policy changes that would weaken the integrity of the program.
- Restore the ARRA benefit increase to SNAP benefit levels through March 2014 and provide a soft, phase out to protect families from a sharp cliff in benefit levels.
- Transition CSFP to a seniors-only program while grandfathering in current participants to promote greater efficiencies and recognize CSFP's evolution to serving a primarily senior population.

Farm Bill nutrition programs have a real impact on your constituents, many of whom rely on one of our food banks or federal nutrition programs to meet their basic food needs. Please protect and strengthen TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP in the Farm Bill reauthorization. In the meantime, we invite you to visit a food bank serving your district so you can meet our clients and see for yourself how much nutrition programs are needed and how well they are working.

Sincerely,

Alaska

- Food Bank of Alaska

Alabama

- Food Bank of North Alabama

Arkansas

- Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance
- Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas
- Harvest Texarkana Regional Food Bank, Inc.
- River Valley Regional Food Banks

Arizona

- Association of Arizona Food Banks
- Community Food Bank
- St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance
- United Food Bank
- Yuma Community Food Bank

California

- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- ABC Recovery Center
- California Association of Food Banks
- Cathedral Center
- Christian Center
- Community Food Bank (Fresno)
- Community Food Pantry (San Bernadino)
- Feeding America San Diego
- FIND Food Bank
- Food Bank for Monterey County
- Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
- Food Share
- Food Bank of Santa Barbara County
- FoodLink for Tulare County, Inc.
- Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
- Palm Desert Oasis
- Placer Food Bank
- Redwood Empire Food Bank
- San Francisco Food Bank
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

- Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County
- Soroptimist House of Hope
- St. Elizabeth's Food Pantry

Colorado

- Care and Share Food Bank
- Community Food Share
- Food Bank of the Rockies
- Weld Food Bank

Connecticut

- Connecticut Food Bank
- Foodshare

Florida

- Agape Food Bank
- America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend
- Feeding South Florida
- Florida Association of Food Banks
- Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida
- Second Harvest North Florida
- Treasure Coast Food Bank

Georgia

- America Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia
- Feeding the Valley, Inc.
- Georgia Food Bank Association
- Golden Harvest Food Bank
- Middle Georgia Community Food Bank
- Second Harvest of South Georgia, Inc.
- The Atlanta Community Food Bank
- The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia

Iowa

- Boys and Girls Club of Story County
- Calvary Memorial COGIC
- Clearview Recovery

Iowa, cont.

- Eagle's Wings Preschool and Child Care
- Food Bank of Iowa
- Four Oaks
- Greater Love Ministries
- Hispanic Educational Resources
- Iowa Food Bank Association
- Northeast Iowa Food Ban
- Stepping Stones Early Learning Center

Idaho

- The Idaho Food Bank

Illinois

- Eastern Illinois Food Bank
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Peoria Area Food Bank
- River Bend Food Bank

Indiana

- Food Bank of Northwest Indiana
- Food Finders Food Bank, Inc.
- Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana
- Hoosier Hills Food Bank
- Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana

Kansas

- Harvesters – The Community Food Network
- Kansas Food Bank
- Mount St. Scholastica, Inc.

Kentucky

- Dare to Care Food Bank
- Feeding America Kentucky's Heartland
- God's Pantry Food Bank
- Kentucky Association of Food Banks

Louisiana

- Food Bank of Central Louisiana
- Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana
- Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana
- Louisiana Food Bank Association

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana

Massachusetts

- The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- The Greater Boston Food Bank
- Worcester County Food Bank

Maine

- Good Shepherd Food Bank

Michigan

- Christ Church Operation Blessing
- Diversity Arts LLC
- Food Bank of Eastern Michigan
- Food Bank of South Central Michigan
- Food Gatherers
- Forgotten Harvest
- Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeast Michigan
- Ministries of the Bread of Life
- MVCCOH (Food Pantry)

Minnesota

- Channel One Food Bank and Food Shelf
- Hill City Area Food Shelf
- Jacobson Food Shelf
- MAC/NAPS
- Pillager Food Shelf
- Salvation Army
- Second Harvest Heartland
- Second Harvest North Central Food Bank
- Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank
- Walker Area Food Shelf

Missouri

- Adventist Community Services
- AFL-CIO Community Services
- Agape Hosue Inc. of Mountain View
- Cathedral Food Pantry
- God's Storehouse

Missouri, cont.

- Harvesters The Community Food Network
- InterServ
- Kidder Baptist Church
- Least of These, Inc.
- Licking United Comm. Help Center
- Living Hope Thrift Store & Food Pantry
- Missouri Food Bank Association
- Ozarks Food Harvest
- Plattsburg Food Pantry
- Second Harvest Community Food Bank
- Southeast Missouri Food Bank
- St. Louis Area Foodbank
- St. Susanne Food Pantry
- The Harmony House
- The Help Center
- Woodson Chapel Christian Church

Mississippi

- Mississippi Food Network

Montana

- Montana Food Bank Network

North Carolina

- Food Bank of the Albemarle
- Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina
- MANNA Food Bank
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina

North Dakota

- Great Plains Food Bank

Nebraska

- Food Bank for the Heartland
- Food Bank of Lincoln

New Hampshire

- New Hampshire Food Bank

New Jersey

- Community Food Bank of New Jersey

- Food Bank of South Jersey
- NORWESCAP Food Bank
- The Mercer Street Friends Food Bank

New Mexico

- Roadrunner Food Bank

New York

- Food Bank of New York City
- Food Bank of Central New York
- Food Bank of Southern Tier
- Food Bank of Western New York
- Long Island Cares, Inc – The Harry Chapin Food Bank
- Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York

Nevada

- Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- Three Square Food Bank

Ohio

- Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank
- Cleveland Food Bank
- Freestore Food Bank
- Mid-Ohio Food Bank
- Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Clark, Champaign, Logan Cts.
- Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio
- Second Harvest Food Bank Mahoning Valley
- Shared Harvest Food Bank
- Southeastern Ohio Food Bank
- The Foodbank, Inc.
- Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank
- West Ohio Food Bank

Oklahoma

- Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma
- Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

Oregon

- Oregon Food Bank
- St. Andrew SVDP Emergency Services

Pennsylvania

- Ashley Food Bank
- Butler County Community Action
- Canon House and Apartments
- Canonsburg/Houston Food Bank
- Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
- Channels Food Rescue
- Chester County Food Bank
- Church of the Good Samaritan Food Closet
- Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County
- Corner Cupboard Food Bank
- Dickson City Civic Center
- Divine Sent Food Cupboard
- Donora Food Pantry
- Grace Food Pantry of Coal Center, PA
- Greater Berks Food Bank
- Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
- Greater Washington County Food Bank
- H&J Weinberg Food Bank
- Hunger-Free Pennsylvania
- Jewish Family Service Of Greater Wilkes-Barre
- Kennett Area Community Service
- Mainstream Revival Center
- Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission
- Mountaintop Area Food Bank at St. Pauls
- Our Fathers House Food Bank
- Oxford Area Neighborhood Services Center
- Parkesburg Community Outreach
- PathStone Corporation
- Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center
- Philabundance
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania
- SHARE Food Program, Inc.
- SW PA Food Security Partnership
- The Food Pantry
- The Salvation Army
- West Chester Food Cupboard
- West End Food Pantry
- Westmoreland County Food Bank
- White Haven Food Pantry
- Wyoming County Food Pantry

Rhode Island

- Rhode Island Community Food Bank

South Carolina

- Harvest Hope Food Bank
- Lowcountry Food Bank

South Dakota

- Feeding South Dakota

Tennessee

- Chattanooga Area Food Bank
- Mid-South Food Bank
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee

Texas

- Brazos Valley Food Bank
- Capital Area Food Bank of Texas
- East Texas Food Bank
- Food Bank of Corpus Christi
- Food Bank of Golden Crescent
- Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley
- Food Bank of West Central Texas
- High Plains Food Bank
- Houston Food Bank
- North Texas Food Bank
- San Antonio Food Bank (SAFB)
- South Plains Food Bank
- South Texas Food Bank
- Tarrant Area Food Bank
- Texas Food Bank Network

Texas, cont.

- West Texas Food Bank
- Wichita Falls Area Food Bank

Utah

- Utah Food Bank

Virginia

- 82nd Airborne Division Assoc.
- AIDS Response Effort Inc.
- Behind the Veil Ministry
- Blue Ridge Area Food Bank
- Boones Chapel Food Pantry
- Botetourt Food Pantry
- Buckroe Baptist Church
- Christian Village of Eastern VA
- Fauquier County Food Distribution Coalition
- Federation of Virginia Food Banks
- Feed More, Inc.
- Feeding America Southwest Virginia
- Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia
- Food Bank of the Virginia Peninsula
- Fox Hill Mutual Homes
- Fredericksburg Area Food Bank
- Heritage Cares Food Pantry
- Highland Presbyterian Food Pantry
- Islamic Society of Winchester
- Merrimack Elementary School
- Morning Glory Baptist Church
- Mt. Calvary Baptist Church Food Ministry
- New Life Minister Center
- NPCFC
- One Accord Baptist Church Food Pantry
- Region Ten
- Rosalind Hills Food Pantry
- Scottsville Bread of Life Ministry
- Sorrentino Asset Management
- Steeping Stone Mission of Franklin County
- The Salvation Army
- Truth Tabernacle
- Valley Interfaith Council

- Willing Partners, Inc.

Vermont

- Bethel Food Shelf
- Community Kitchen of Vermont/CEFS
- Deerfield Valley Food Pantry
- Guilford Cares Food Pantry
- Hinesburg Food Shelf
- Just Basics
- Lunenburg, Gilman Senior Citizen Center, Inc.
- Montpelier Housing Authority
- Randolph Area Food Shelf
- Roxbury Church and Food Shelf
- Springfield Family Center
- The Onion River Food Shelf, Inc.
- Upper Valley Haven
- Vermont Food Bank
- Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf

Washington

- Adventist Community Center of Longview
- Aloha Inn
- Arlington Community Food Bank
- Blaine Food Bank
- Bremerton Foodline
- C.A.M.P.
- Calvary Community Supper
- Carol Rowe Memorial Food Bank
- Destiny Clothes and Loaves
- Elizabeth Gregory Home
- Emerald City Breakfast Program
- Federal Way Community Supper
- FISH Food Bank
- FISH of Cowlitz County
- Food Lifeline
- Foothills Foodbank
- Forks Abuse Program
- FWCCN Thursday Community Supper
- Hamilton Community Food Bank
- Kim Enterprises, Inc.
- Lynnwood Food Bank
- Ocean Shores Food Bank

Washington, cont.

- Olympia Union Gospel Mission
- OPERATION: Sack Lunch
- Orcas Island Food Bank
- Pastor's Pantry
- Point Robert's Food Bank
- Port Townsend Food Bank
- Providence Sojourner Place
- Queen Anne Food Bank at Sacred Heart
- Rainier Emergency Food Center
- ROOTS Young Adult Shelter
- Second Harvest Inland Northwest
- Sky Valley Food Bank
- South Whidbey Good Cheer
- Teen Feed
- The Auburn Food Bank
- Victory Outreach Mens and Womens Home

Washington, DC

- Capital Area Food Bank

Wisconsin

- Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin

West Virginia

- Huntington Area Food Bank, Inc.
- Mountaineer Food Bank