

May 16, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Dean, California Republican
Congressional Delegation
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chair, California Democratic
Congressional Delegation
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

Thank you for your leadership fighting poverty-related hunger for all Californians. On behalf of **73** anti-hunger and anti-poverty organizations, [we urge all California Members of Congress to reject any cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) in the Farm Bill, including to the Thrifty Food Plan.](#) Unfortunately, according to Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates, House Agriculture Committee Chair Glenn Thompson's proposal would cut \$30 billion from SNAP over 10 years. This would mean a **\$3.6 million cut to SNAP for California families between FY2027 and FY2033.**

Instead, to end hunger and systemic poverty facing our communities, the upcoming Farm Bill must strengthen critical food benefits for families, children, seniors, people with disabilities, and other households in California who face hunger.

With the ending of COVID-era anti-hunger supports like [SNAP Emergency Allotments](#) and Pandemic EBT, combined with record spikes in food prices, hunger is again on the rise. [23% of all California households, including 49% of Black households with children, report food insecurity.](#) Food Banks are on the frontlines of this hunger crisis every day, facing still-record demand: [78% have had to scale back services in some way.](#)

[The House Ag Committee proposes to cut \\$30B in SNAP,](#) by eliminating critical future USDA evaluations of the baseline Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) used to determine minimally adequate SNAP benefits. [\\$3.6 billion, or 12% of the lost SNAP](#) dollars, would be taken from the 5 million Californians who spend SNAP benefits at 23,874 authorized EBT retailers statewide. This would mean as much as **\$6.46 Billion in total lost economic activity in California alone**, hurting farmers, farm workers, truckers, grocers, and others across our critical food sector.

[Cuts would have an outsized impact on the Central Valley and other growing regions, which are home to many of the top 10 California Districts with the highest SNAP participation,](#) where food is sadly often out of reach for the communities that grow and sell it.

Forcing cost-neutral TFP reevaluations would also cut more than:

- **\$12 million in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) aid to California food banks**, which is critical in getting fruits, vegetables, and other staples from U.S. producers to families in need, and;
- **\$60 million in Summer EBT, taking food from 6.8 million California children during the summer months when hunger spikes.**

The TFP is the lowest of USDA's four meal plans and represents the bare minimum a family needs. For 50 years the TFP was only adjusted for food price inflation but retained antiquated assumptions about nutritious diets. **The TFP also assumed that families would spend hours each day preparing meals, such as hand-soaking and boiling dried beans rather than buying canned beans.** Americans work long hours, commute to school or work, and must be able to buy foods that support quickly putting healthy meals on the table for their children.

In 2018, Congress passed a bipartisan Farm Bill which directed USDA to take into account factors other than inflation and to re-evaluate the TFP. USDA issued a revised TFP for Fiscal Year 2022 resulting in an average increase **of \$1.40 per person, per day.** This was a modest but critical, and long overdue, adjustment to SNAP's purchasing power - lifting more than 1 million children above the poverty line.

Even with the adjustment, the average benefit is only \$6 per person a day, and the current maximum SNAP benefit levels still fall short of the cost of low-income meals in 98% of California counties, and studies have shown that, on average, households spend close to 80% of their SNAP benefits within the first two weeks of the month. Scientists, nutritionists, and policy experts must be able to continue reevaluating the TFP in the future so that SNAP can continue to reflect the reality of the world around us.

SNAP is our nation's largest and most important anti-hunger program, serving over 5 million Californians.

- SNAP provides nine meals to every one provided by food banks — a gap that private charity could never fill.
- SNAP supports our food and farm economy. Each \$1 in benefits generates as much as \$1.80 in GDP during an economic downturn.
- SNAP lifted over 1.1 million Californians above the poverty line in 2023 and reduces food insecurity for households on the program, including children.

For all of these reasons, we call on the California Congressional Delegation to support and build upon Sen. Stabenow's plan - without cuts or offsets to SNAP or other Farm Bill programs - by prioritizing bold policy solutions through:

- **The Closing the Meal Gap Act** (H.R. 3037 Adams / S. 1336 Gillibrand) which would move SNAP benefit calculations to the more realistic Low-Cost Food Plan.
- **The Improving Access to Nutrition Act** (H.R. 1510 Lee / S. 2435 Welch) which would repeal SNAP's harsh, failed three-month time limit for out-of-work Americans and improve SNAP access for families working their way up the economic ladder.

- **The Enhance Access To SNAP Act** ([H.R. 3183 Gomez](#) / [S. 1488 Gillibrand](#)) which would eliminate the outdated and unfair SNAP restrictions for college students.

We again thank the California Delegation's leadership supporting and leading anti-hunger initiatives to strengthen SNAP, Summer EBT, and TEFAP. Our organizations, representing a range of community groups, health care providers, social workers, legal aid, and emergency food providers are united in our opposition to cuts to SNAP. We urge you to speak out against this proposal from the House Agriculture Committee and we look forward to your continued commitment to centering and supporting our most vulnerable populations in the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Abrazar, Inc.
Agriculture Institute of Marin
Alameda County Community Food Bank
All Home
Asian Health Services
California Association of Food Banks
California Community Colleges, Office of the Chancellor
California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA)
California Competes: Higher Education for a Stronger Economy
California Council of the Blind
California Council of Churches IMPACT
California Primary Care Association
Cal State Student Association
California WIC Association
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
Center for Ecoliteracy
Ceres Community Project
Central California Food Bank
Center for Food Safety
Center for Healthy Communities
Children's Institute
CRLA Foundation
Community Action Agency of Butte County, Inc.
Communities Actively Living Independent & Free
Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Community Services Unlimited
Courage California
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin
OC Food Bank
Feeding San Diego

Food Access Los Angeles
Food for People
Food Share
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Fresh Approach
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
GLIDE
EXCELSIOR WORKS - San Francisco, CA
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Imperial Valley Food Bank
Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Justice in Aging
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)
Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Long Beach City College Basic Needs Program
Lutheran Office of Public Policy- California
Northern California College Promise Coalition
Nourish California
Oasis Legal Services
Office of Kat Taylor
Organizing Rooted in Abolition, Liberation, and Empowerment (ORALE)
Pesticide Action Network North America
Redwood Empire Food Bank
River City Food Bank
Rising Communities
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
San Francisco- Marin Food Bank
San Diego for Every Child
San Diego Hunger Coalition
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Second Harvest of Santa Cruz County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
SLO Food Bank
Southern California College Attainment Network
The Resource Connection Food Bank
Valley Families United
Veggielution
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Young Invincibles