

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-222 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

CC: Senator Patrick Leahy; Senator Richard Shelby; Senator Debbie Stabenow; Senator John Boozman; Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro; Congresswoman Kay Granger; Congressman David Scott; Congressman Glenn Thompson

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

As organizations dedicated to alleviating hunger, we deeply appreciate the actions Congress has taken thus far to address the unprecedented hunger crisis in the U.S. brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and urge continued action through the budget reconciliation process to assist the 24 million adults and approximately 12 million children in the U.S. struggling with food insecurity.¹

The undersigned national organizations support the following food security and nutrition provisions included in the proposed House reconciliation relief legislation released in the Agriculture Committee and Education and Labor Committee and urge you to include them in a final relief package:

- **Extend the 15 percent Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit increase through September 2021 and provide other critical investments.** SNAP is the first line of defense for hungry families and provides an economic stimulus. Maintaining the increase is critical to helping families in need. In future packages, we believe Congress should consider tying the increase to an indicator of significant improvement in the economy. Additionally, we support additional critical investments in state SNAP administrative expenses to meet increased demand in the program, as well as investments for SNAP online purchasing and technology improvements to improve access to healthy food.
- **Extend Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) through the public health emergency, including summers.** P-EBT only goes through September 2021, and its benefits expire with the school calendar. Children need access to food through the summer since many continue to face difficulties accessing meal sites, and they will need P-EBT next school year if schedules continue to be disrupted. We support the extension of P-EBT through

¹ According to Census Pulse data (January 6-18) as reported by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and>.

school years during which there's an emergency declaration and provisions to allow the program to continue into the summer months following those school years.

- **Invest in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to strengthen nutrition services and address health inequities.** WIC's public health success improves pregnancy and birth outcomes, reduces the prevalence of childhood obesity, and closes racial disparities in maternal and infant health, breastfeeding, and child nutrition. Although WIC has seen participation increases during the COVID-19 pandemic, many families are still not yet connected with WIC's targeted public health nutrition services. We support the inclusion of two provisions that will increase WIC's impact on health outcomes: (1) a four-month increase in WIC's Cash Value Benefit, raising the benefit for fruit and vegetable purchases from \$9 per month for children/\$11 per month for women up to \$35 per month for all and (2) \$390 million in multiyear funding for outreach and program modernization efforts. This funding can be leveraged to tailor outreach efforts to specific communities and drive forward technology innovations that streamline access to the program and redeem benefits for nutritious foods.
- **Temporarily extend eligibility for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** Ensure young adults can maintain access to CACFP nutrition resources by temporarily extending the age of eligibility for CACFP at emergency homeless shelters.
- **Address the nutritional needs in Puerto Rico and U.S. territories.** Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands receive a capped block grant instead of participating in the SNAP program, highlighting the historic unequal treatment of their residents. We support the addition of \$1 billion to these block grants to help meet the food needs in these areas.
- **Support the nutrition needs of older Americans.** As with health issues related to COVID, hunger is currently hitting older Americans hard. We support the inclusion of \$750 million in emergency funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program, which provides nutritious meals, safety checks and social connection to individuals 60 and older, be included in the next COVID-19 rescue package. We support the inclusion of \$37 million for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program through September 30, 2022 to ensure this program can serve low-income seniors.

These steps will provide critical support in addressing hunger during the pandemic while also boosting the economy. Yet we know more will be needed in future relief packages to continue investments in these proven programs. In addition to extending the SNAP benefit boost as mentioned above, support is needed for additional food and infrastructure support to food banks. In particular, we urge Congress to provide \$900 million to purchase food through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) through September 30, 2022 to ensure food banks can provide emergency hunger relief to people in need. In addition, we urge Congress to invest \$543 million in the infrastructure of our nation's charitable food system.

We are encouraged by the bi-partisan urgency demonstrated by the Administration and Congress in tackling the critical needs of families who are struggling to put food on the table. We urge you to act for hungry families by ensuring these provisions are a central part of COVID relief.

Respectfully,

A Place at the Table

Alliance to End Hunger

Bread For the World
Cargill, Incorporated
Congressional Hunger Center
Danone North America
Edesia
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Feeding America
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
FoodFinder, Inc.
General Mills
Hunger Free America
ICNA CSJ
Islamic Relief USA
Mars, Incorporated
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Meals on Wheels America
National WIC Association
Nestle USA
Penny Appeal USA
RESULTS
Rise Against Hunger
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network (SCAN)
Share Our Strength
Society of St. Andrew
Souper Bowl of Caring, Inc.
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
The Root Cause Coalition
UnidosUS
Unilever United States