



August 24, 2018

Representative Eliot Engel
2462 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Paul Tonko
2463 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Engel and Congressman Tonko:

We are writing regarding the conference committee deliberations on the farm bill, a critical piece of legislation which will directly affect the nutrition of **nearly three million individuals in New York State** receiving benefits through the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#). On behalf of our 2 organizations and the 140 anti-hunger, emergency food programs and other concerned partners signed on this letter, we first want to thank you for your long-standing support and understanding of the importance and strength of SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs. You have been true anti-hunger champions for families and individuals in your district and across our state.

As the conferees begin their deliberations we ask that you work with all members of the Conference Committee to oppose any proposals that reduce SNAP, which serves as our nation's most important anti-hunger program with 40 million Americans currently struggling to put food on the table each day, 2.9 million who live in our state, including low-income children, working families, seniors, individuals, veterans and people with disabilities. The reauthorization of the 2018 Farm Bill presents an opportunity to reaffirm our nation's bi-partisan commitment to ending hunger. The bill only achieves this goal by strengthening, not cutting, our investments in SNAP and other vital anti-hunger programs.

According to the Census Bureau's 2015 Supplemental Poverty Measure, poverty and hunger exist in every corner of every state, including New York. Anti-hunger programs like SNAP help reduce hunger for over [2.9 million low-income New Yorkers, including 1.1 million children, and 67,000 veterans](#). SNAP recipients live in [small towns, cities and rural areas across New York State](#) and rely on the benefits that SNAP provides to put food on the table.

SNAP is especially important to our state's older adult population. In 2016, 35 percent of the 1.6 million households that participated in SNAP were households with at least one eligible elderly adult (age 60+). These households tend to have exceptionally low incomes, and this modest benefit helps seniors who too often are forced to choose between paying for food, medicine, rent, heat or other daily costs. Over 80 percent of elderly SNAP recipients live alone, receiving an average monthly benefit of \$178 per month – less than \$6 per day.

In New York State, SNAP provides more meals in 2 months than Food Banks provide in one year. Because SNAP benefits are inadequate to last the entire month, nearly one-third of households that receive SNAP still rely on food banks to make ends meet. If the final version of the farm bill includes any of the [cuts proposed in H.R.2.](#), as many as [675 million meals will be lost in New York State](#) over the next decade and the foodbank

network in our state cannot fill this additional need.

During consideration of the 2018 Farm Bill we ask that you also make the needed investments in TEFAP food and fully fund storage and transportation assistance, which is vital to keeping food safe and ensuring that hungry people in communities across our State have access to this food when their SNAP benefits run out or they are not eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs.

SNAP also supports New York's economic viability, while playing an important role in preventing hunger. SNAP brought over \$8 billion in total economic activity in New York in 2017 and every billion in SNAP generates approximately 14,000 jobs, particularly in our state's robust food and farming sectors and helps respond to changing economic conditions and in times of disaster, which are all too common in our state. Households receive SNAP benefits on electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, which can be used only to purchase food at one of the 263,100 authorized retail locations around the country, including 18,600 in New York.

The bipartisan farm bill passed by the Senate affirms what millions of people across the country know to be true: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) reduces hunger and poverty, and protecting and strengthening SNAP — not cutting it — is the right way forward. The Senate bill strengthens SNAP by testing new tools to help the program run more smoothly and supporting states that want to try innovative solutions to help SNAP participants get and keep a job.

In contrast the House farm bill will increase hunger and hardship by taking away—or cutting—food assistance from many struggling New Yorkers, including parents raising kids, people with disabilities, older workers, low-wage workers, and people temporarily in between jobs. It also imposes costly and bureaucratic new work requirements on SNAP recipients.

H.R. 2 seeks to:

- Cut SNAP benefits by nearly \$19 billion and diverts much of that money to a risky new scheme of ineffective and unproven work programs. Additionally, the bill includes unforgiving penalties that would take away food assistance from those who don't prove every month that they work enough hours or qualify for an exemption.
- These harsh rules and penalties would apply to millions of SNAP participants, putting at risk parents and their kids, older workers, and people who are already working but can't get enough hours at work to meet the requirement.
- Make it harder for states like New York to waive the bill's new unforgiving penalties, which would hurt workers in many areas of New York that are still experiencing high unemployment.
- Open the door for states to turn over SNAP administration to for-profit companies that have an interest in their bottom line rather than effectively implementing program rules and serving needy clients.

Contrary to its sponsors' claims, the House bill's provisions do not help people who can work to find good-paying jobs. Instead, the bill woefully underfunds work programs, providing less than \$30 per needed job training slot per month — whereas the cost of operating effective programs ranges from about \$7,500 to as much as \$14,000 per participant. As a result, this proposal will likely fail to help people find jobs but will take food assistance from struggling families.

The best outcome for our state is a strong, bipartisan farm bill that protects SNAP. The Senate farm bill meets these criteria. We urge House and Senate lawmakers to work across party lines to ensure that the conference agreement on the farm bill adopts the Senate's approach to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs.

Please ensure that the needed investments in TEFAP food and fully funding storage and transportation assistance are also addressed as part of the final Farm Bill package. As you confer with each other and your colleagues in the coming weeks, we hope that you will help inform the debate and ultimate decision by reminding your colleagues of the reality of the experience of food insecurity in America. We also ask that you work with all members of the Conference Committee to oppose any proposals that reduce the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other nutrition assistance programs.

Signed:

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518-436-8757

Food Bank Association of New York State
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Schenectady, NY 12303
518-930-7052

Co-Signed:

2-1-1 WNY

Assembly Member Barbara Lifton

AARP New York

Bailey House, Inc.

Bread of Life Outreach

Bronx Bethany Community Corporation

Broome County Council of Churches Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse

Care-n-Share Food Pantry

Catholic Charities of Chemung & Schuyler Counties

Catholic Charities of Steuben

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany

Catholic Charities of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse

Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga

Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)

Children's Aid

Children's Defense Fund- New York

Chinese American Planning Council

Citizen Action of New York

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

City Harvest

Coalition for the Homeless

Community Food Advocates

Community Outreach

Compass House

Cuba Cultural Center, Inc.

Cypresshills Local Development Corporation

Day Care Council of New York

Divine Mercy Food Pantry

Dutchess Outreach, Inc.

Empire Justice Center

Equity Advocates

Every Child Matters
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA)
Feeding Westchester
First Shiloh Baptist Church Food Pantry
Fiscal Policy Institute
Food & Water Watch
Food Bank for New York City
Food Bank of Central New York
Food Bank of the Hudson Valley
Food Bank of the Southern Tier
Food Bank of Western New York
Food For All
Foodlink, Inc.
Foodnet Meals on Wheels
GardenShare
Good Shepherd Pantry
Good Shepherd Services
Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition
Green Education and Legal Fund
Group Ministries Inc.
Harlem Children's Zone
Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc.
Health & Welfare Council of Long Island
Heart, Love & Soul, Inc.
Hearts for the Homeless of WNY, Inc.
Human Services Council
Hunger Action Network of New York State
InterAgency Council
Island Harvest Food Bank
JCEO of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Inc.
Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula
Jewish Social Action Coalition
Kids R Kids Feeding Program
LIFE Progressive Services Group Inc.
Little Flower Child & Family Services
Living Water Fellowship
Lowville Food Pantry, Inc.
Massachusetts Avenue Project
Maximizing Independent Living Choices, Inc.
MercyFirst
MinKwon Center for Community Action
NAMI Huntington
Neighbor to Neighbor Food Pantry
Neighborhood Benches, Inc.
Neighborhood Health Center

Network of Religious Communities
New Covenant United Church of Christ
New York Association on Independent Living
New York Common Pantry
New York Democratic County Committee
New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
New York State Council of Churches
New York State Network for Youth Success
Niagara Community Action Program, Inc.
No Kid Hungry New York
North East Community Center
NYC Employment and Training Coalition
NYS Council of Catholic Charities Directors
Olean Food Pantry Inc.
Operation Good Neighbor
Partners in Nutrition, LLC
Partnership with Children
Pawling Resource Center
Prevent Child Abuse New York
Raymond Community Church Food Pantry
Refuge Temple of Christ
Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York
Response to Love Center
River Fund
Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center
Schenectady Community Action Program, Inc.
Schenectady Community Ministries
Sinclairville Food Cupboard
Sister Mary Josette Food Pantry
Slow Food Hudson Valley
Slow Food New York State
Slow Food North Shore
Soup and Sandwich Saturday
Southtowns Christian Center Food Pantry
Spencer Van Etten Community Food Cupboard
Springville Concord Community Food Pantry
St Paul's Tiger's Den Food Pantry
St Philips food pantry
St Vincent de Paul Food Pantry
St. Francis of Assisi SVDP
St. John de LaSalle Community Care
St. John's Bread and Life
St. Lawrence Food Pantry
St. Leo/St. Vincent de Paul
St. Paul's Episcopal Food Pantry

State University of New York Student Assembly
SUNY Poly UUP Retirees
The Door - A Center of Alternatives
The Financial Clinic
The Genesis Center/St. Simon's Mission Pantry
The Magdalene Project
The Salvation Army-Temple Corps
Tioga County Rural Ministry, Inc.
Tompkins Co Cooperative Ext. Nutrition and Family Development Committees
Twice Fed Food Pantry
UJA-Federation NY
United Neighborhood Houses
United University Professions
United Way of New York City
University Settlement Society of New York
UPC Food Ministry Food Pantry
Urban Pathways
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
www.chn.org

Cc: Senator Charles Schumer
Cc: Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Cc: Rep. Lee Zeldin NY-1
Cc: Rep. Peter King NY-2
Cc: Rep. Thomas Suozzi NY-3
Cc: Rep. Kathleen Rice NY-4
Cc: Rep. Gregory Meeks NY-5
Cc: Rep. Grace Meng NY-6
Cc: Rep. Nydia Velazquez NY-7
Cc: Rep. Hakeem Jeffries NY-8
Cc: Rep. Yvette Clarke NY -9
Cc: Rep. Jerry Nadler NY-10
Cc: Rep. Daniel Donovan, Jr. NY-11
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Maloney NY-12
Cc: Rep. Adriano Espaillat NY-13
Cc: Rep. Joe Crowley NY-14
Cc: Rep. Jose Serrano NY-15
Cc: Rep. Nita Lowey NY-17
Cc: Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney NY-18
Cc: Rep. John Faso NY-19
Cc: Rep. Elise Stefanik NY-21
Cc: Rep. Claudia Tenney NY-22
Cc: Rep. Tom Reed NY-23
Cc: Rep. John Katko NY-24
Cc: Rep. Brian Higgins NY-26
Cc: Rep. Chris Collins NY-27