

Dear Senator:

In seeking ways to meet pay-as-you-go requirements for priority legislation, Members of Congress and the Administration are considering cutting future monthly benefit amounts in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) to fund a variety of other priorities. While these proposals may have merit in their own right, they should not be advanced at the expense of hungry families. We urge you to categorically reject efforts to cut SNAP benefits and take SNAP funding for other purposes.

More than 40 million vulnerable Americans depend on SNAP. They have very low-incomes: in an average month in 2008, 87 percent of SNAP households had incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and nearly 41 percent had incomes at or below one half of the poverty line. Nearly half of all SNAP recipients are children. Nearly one in ten is age 60 or over.

SNAP benefit levels have long been inadequate to provide a minimum healthy diet throughout the month, but the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) boosted benefit levels for these vulnerable people. The ARRA SNAP boosts were warranted when passed and continue to be vitally important now and in the future.

First, SNAP benefits are crucial in helping help low-income people struggling against hunger. In the last quarter of 2009, 18.5 percent of American households – 24.1 percent of households with children – reported to Gallup that there had been times in the prior 12 months when they did not have enough money to buy food that they or their family needed. Without the ARRA SNAP benefit boosts, this food hardship would be even worse.

Second, SNAP benefits are an important component of a strengthened and sustained economic recovery. Based on USDA research, it is estimated that each \$1 in federally-funded SNAP benefits generates \$1.84 in economic activity. Both conservative and progressive economists describe SNAP benefits as the best economic stimulus, dollar for dollar. Cutting back on the ARRA SNAP benefit levels would undermine the effectiveness of SNAP as a support for jobs and growth.

Even with the ARRA boosts, SNAP benefits average less than \$4.50 per person per day. While the cost of food may not have risen at the rate anticipated, reverting to the inadequate previous level of benefits, adjusted for inflation, will not provide SNAP recipients with the funds needed to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet on a consistent basis. The fact that the proposed termination of the ARRA boost and reduction of families' monthly benefits is not effective immediately does not make its impact on vulnerable children, seniors and others any more acceptable.

Rolling back the ARRA SNAP boosts would return millions of families to the situation where their SNAP/ benefits typically run out in the third or early in the fourth week of the month. It would increase hunger. It would increase obesity by making it even harder for struggling families to purchase healthy food. It would harm job creation and economic growth. It would increase the number of hungry children shortly before the 2015 date the President has set as the goal to end childhood hunger in the U.S.

Now is not the time to roll back the fight against hunger.

Alliance to End Hunger
Association of Nutrition Services Agencies (ANSA)
Bread for the World
Catholic Charities USA
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Food Security Coalition
Congressional Hunger Center
End Hunger Network
The Episcopal Church
First Focus Campaign for Children.
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
RESULTS
School Nutrition Association (SNA)
Share Our Strength (SOS)
Sojourners
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism
WHY Hunger