

November 19, 2008

Dear Member of Congress:

We urge quick action to provide a temporary boost in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (the new national name for the Food Stamp Program). Specifically, we urge Congress when it returns to work after the election to provide at least \$12 billion to support a temporary increase in SNAP/Food Stamp benefits and to enhance administrative funding to process SNAP/Food Stamp cases. There are other important stimulus elements that we support, including extended unemployment insurance benefits, state fiscal relief, and other nutrition and low-income support programs. We believe, however, that a significant SNAP/Food Stamp boost is a fundamental building block of any fair and effective stimulus package.

The aid proposed is targeted, temporary and timely. It is little wonder that a wide spectrum of economic experts have pointed to increased Food Stamp spending as an effective part of a stimulus strategy--many of them have identified it as, dollar-for-dollar, the single best stimulus strategy.

Increasing SNAP/Food Stamp benefits is the fastest and easiest way to help jump-start the economy. The benefits must be spent for food in grocery stores and are targeted to low-income people who are most likely to spend those benefits quickly. With the advent of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology, getting the extra benefits to the more than 29 million current SNAP clients can happen expeditiously.

The economic impact would be significant. Based on USDA research, it is estimated that each \$1 in federal SNAP/Food Stamp benefits generates nearly twice that in economic activity.

A temporary benefit boost would be of tremendous help to families because SNAP/Food Stamps fall short of the amount needed to purchase the government's lowest cost meal plan. The real cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) market basket for a household of four was \$605.80 in September 2008, and almost certainly will continue rising in the months ahead. That September cost is already \$17.50 more than the maximum SNAP/Food Stamp benefit for that household that will be paid throughout FY 2009 (\$588.30). With the maximum benefit level static for the next 12 months, unless Congress grants a stimulus boost, the Thrifty Food Plan becomes increasingly unaffordable each month as prices rise.

Even before this economic downturn, more than 35 million people lived in U.S. households that faced a constant struggle against hunger. Over the year, unemployment and underemployment rates have risen, foreclosures have become too common, and prices for food, energy and other basics have climbed sharply.

Increasing numbers of families are turning to the SNAP/Food Stamp Program during this economic crisis. A temporary boost in administrative funds for states to process

SNAP/Food Stamp cases will help insure that families get the help they need and that there is maximum economic impact from the temporary benefit increases.

America's families urgently need an economic recovery package that directly addresses their struggles and that is effective in helping to grow our economy. A significant investment in a temporary SNAP/Food Stamp benefits boost and in administrative support for the states is an essential part of the package American families need.

Sincerely,

ACORN

American Commodity Distribution Association

Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.

Americans for Indian Opportunity

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Association of Nutrition Services Agencies

Bread for the World

Center for Community Change

Children's Defense Fund

Coalition on Human Needs

Communications Workers of America

Community Action Partnership

Community Food Security Coalition

Congressional Hunger Center

Consumer Federation of America

EBT Council

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Feed the Children

First Focus

Food Research and Action Center

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Generations United

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

League of United Latin American Citizens

Lutheran Services in America

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Migrant Legal Action Program

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association of Social Workers

National Center for Law and Economic Justice

National Community Action Foundation

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of La Raza

National CSFP Association

National Grange

National Jobs for All Coalition

National Priorities Project
National Research Center for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
Neighborworks America
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Prevention Institute
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
School Nutrition Association
Share Our Strength
Union for Reform Judaism
United Farm Workers of America
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
USAction
Voices for America's Children
World Hunger Year
Xaverian Brothers
YWCA USA