

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2011

The Honorable John Kerry
U.S. Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kerry,

We write to you as a member of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to implore you to protect our nation's anti-hunger programs. Specifically, we ask that you not find cost savings in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) since this program is a true safety net for America's lowest income and neediest families. If this critical lifeline is not protected, more children, seniors, low-income working parents and unemployed people will go hungry.

Last December, the President's bi-partisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform developed deficit reduction recommendations to reduce the federal deficit without cutting funding for anti-hunger programs. The Commission's final recommendations for deficit reduction totaling \$4 trillion over 10 years made no cuts to our nation's nutrition programs such as SNAP and the child nutrition programs. Similarly, the Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Six" deficit reduction plan also totaled \$4 trillion over 10 years without cutting into SNAP or any other critical anti-hunger programs. In fact, the "Gang of Six" plan explicitly precluded the Agriculture Committee from cutting SNAP funding when making deficit reduction recommendations.

There has never been a more important time to protect SNAP, the critical anti-hunger program that makes sure that all Americans in need can have food on their dinner tables. Millions of individuals and families continue to struggle with poverty and hunger. There were 46.2 million people in poverty in 2010, up from 43.6 million in 2009 — the fourth consecutive annual increase and the largest number in the 52 years for which poverty estimates have been published. 49 million people live in food insecure households, according to USDA and the Census Bureau. These statistics mean that every day Americans find themselves without enough food to feed their families. SNAP saves families from going hungry.

In addition to lifting families out of poverty and keeping children from going hungry, SNAP offers a stimulus to local economies. USDA reports that for every SNAP dollar spent, there is a \$1.79 return to the economy.

The deficit reduction plan should not – and need not – increase hunger and poverty.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Mary Landrieu
United States Senator

Bill Nelson

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Barbara Mikulski

Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator

Mark Begich

Mark Begich
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Al Franken

Al Franken
United States Senator

Frank R. Lautenberg

Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bernie Sanders

Bernie Sanders
United States Senator

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Carl Levin

Carl Levin
United States Senator