

November 12, 2019

Chairwoman Nita Lowey
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Richard Shelby
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Kay Granger
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Leahy,

We, the undersigned faith-based organizations, representing millions of people of faith across the country, **urge you to take action to ensure that tens of millions of low-income families and children continue to receive needed federal food assistance without delay or gaps in service in the event of a future government shutdown.** Specifically, we urge you to extend the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) authority to fund the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child nutrition programs for 120 days following the expiration of legislation funding the government.

Our various faith traditions compel us to care for those who are food insecure. Many of our organizations, congregations, and leaders work to feed, clothe, house, and serve our friends and neighbors who are struggling, but we know that we cannot do this work alone. Nearly 40 million American men, women, and children struggle to put food on the table on a regular basis. While charitable organizations play a vital role in addressing hunger, we know that the overwhelming majority of food assistance in this country has historically come from—and must continue to come from—federal programs like SNAP and child nutrition programs.

Earlier this year, during the longest shutdown in American history, our congregations and communities saw first-hand the increased need and stress placed on families who were uncertain whether their nutrition benefits would run out. The shutdown caused confusion for food insecure families and state agencies alike. Although USDA made efforts to front-load nutrition benefits, many households experienced a much longer than usual gap between their February and March benefits. Forcing food insecure households to stretch limited resources even further means they are likely to go hungry. While charitable entities jumped into action to help struggling families, many congregations and organizations were stretched thin, and too many households endured unnecessary anxiety and hardship.

The pain of a government shutdown should not be borne by struggling families trying to make ends meet. **We therefore urge Congress to extend USDA's authority to fund federal nutrition assistance programs from the current 30-day period to 120 days in the upcoming Continuing Resolution.** This will better ensure the food security of our most vulnerable neighbors and will provide much-needed reassurance to people who face food insecurity as well as the organizations that serve them.

We thank you for your consideration of this request and your recognition of the importance of protecting nutrition assistance programs for the millions of struggling Americans. No matter a person's circumstance, no one deserves to be hungry.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
Bread for the World
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Federations of North American
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Pax Christi USA
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
Women of Reform Judaism

CC:

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
House Majority Whip James Clyburn
House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Whip Steve Scalise
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Whip John Thune
Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Whip Richard J. Durbin