

July 21,2017

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
1516 Longworth HOB
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Fortenberry,

As Congress considers the FY 2018 budget resolution, we, the undersigned, write to ensure that federal funding is adequate to address food insecurity in our state through successful, cost-effective nutrition assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These programs help ensure that children, military families, veterans, the elderly and people with disabilities do not go hungry.

In Nebraska, 233,350 people—nearly 2.5 times the number of Husker fans in Memorial Stadium on game days—experience hunger.ⁱ Food insecurity has increased by 67% in the last decade, and today, 1 in 5 Nebraska children don't know where their next meal is coming from.ⁱⁱ The scourge of hunger would be far greater, however, without the assistance families receive as part of cost-effective nutrition safety net programs such as:

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps);
- The National School Breakfast and School Lunch Program;
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to serve
- The Summer Meals program;
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP);
- The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; and
- Nutrition assistance programs for the elderly such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and congregate and home-delivery meals.

SNAP has proven to be one of the most effective and efficient anti-poverty programs for Nebraskan children and families. It is estimated that SNAP has lifted 34,000 Nebraskans above the poverty line.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, USDA studies of the effectiveness of the program have found that SNAP participation is associated with the purchase of more nutritious fresh foods, less fast food consumption, and a reduction in family and child food insecurity in both rural and urban areas.^{iv}

The current funding structure of SNAP expands and contracts based on local need and allows us to keep food on the table for hardworking families through economic downturns or natural disasters, something a block grant or other structural changes could not effectively accomplish. Even in the weak economy of the recession, every \$1.00 increase in SNAP expenditures boosted real GDP by \$1.73, which is why Moody Analytics Chief Economist Mark Zandi declared SNAP one of the strongest tools available to the country to counteract an economic recession.^v

As Nebraskans we share many common values, including the belief that in the middle of the world's breadbasket, no child, veteran, senior citizen, individual with a disability, or parent struggling to make ends meet should go hungry. We respectfully urge you to protect federal nutrition assistance programs

from block grants and other structural changes and protect these programs from arbitrary budget cuts that target the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Center for Rural Affairs

Community Action of Nebraska

Food Bank of Lincoln

Food Bank For the Heartland

Health Center Association of Nebraska

League of Women Voters of Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed

Stand for Schools

United Way of the Midlands

Voices for Children in Nebraska

ⁱ Feeding America. "Food Insecurity in Nebraska." Accessible online at <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2015/overall/nebraska>

ⁱⁱ Voices for Children in Nebraska, *Kids Count in Nebraska 2016 Report*, available online at: www.kidscountnebraska.com.

ⁱⁱⁱ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, "In Nebraska, Safety Net Lifts Roughly 230,000 People above Poverty Line and Provides Health Coverage to 33 Percent of Children."

^{iv} James Malbi, *SNAP Participation and Urban and Rural Food Security*, Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, March 2014 and Patricia M. Anderson and Kristin F. Butcher, "The Relationships Among SNAP Benefits, Grocery Spending, Diet Quality, and the Adequacy of Low-Income Families' Resources," Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, June 2016.

^v Mark M. Zandi, "Assessing the Macro Economic Impact of Fiscal Stimulus 2008," *Moody's Analytics*, 4.