

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2009

Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Jack Kingston
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture Appropriations
1001 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Kingston,

As you begin to consider priorities for the Fiscal Year 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, we respectfully request your consideration of the needs of the increasing number of Americans who are struggling with low-paying jobs and turning to our nation's network of non-profit food banks and other emergency food providers for help.

We ask that you include sufficient funding to help food banks and emergency feeding agencies with the infrastructure funds needed to maintain and update worn out equipment and facilities, particularly those located in rural areas, and with the rising costs of storing and distributing commodities to the needy.

Funding is needed for the Food Bank Infrastructure Grant program that was authorized by the Farm bill to help food banks, primarily in rural areas, that are struggling with out-dated equipment and facilities. We respectfully request that you fund this program at the full authorization level of \$15 million. This funding offers competitive grants to food banks to help them maintain and improve their equipment, facilities, and capacity. It can help to stimulate local economies as well as helping food banks that are struggling with their operating budgets.

As the amount of commodities has risen with the increased mandatory commodity support provided by the Farm Bill and the more recent increases in bonus donations, many states and local emergency feeding organizations are finding it difficult to meet the costs of storing, transporting and distributing these commodities. Fully funding the authorized amount of \$100 million for the state and local Emergency Food Assistance

Program (TEFAP) grants is critical if our emergency feeding agencies are to fully utilize the available commodities and serve the growing numbers of people coming to them for help. Declining state and local resources, particularly in those areas hit the hardest by the economic recession, are making it increasingly difficult to cover these costs. It would be tragic if states and local emergency feeding agencies had to decline USDA commodities because they were unable to safely store, transport and distribute them.

Since early 2007, the following factors have been exerting strong pressures on the nation's emergency food assistance system:

- Demand for emergency food by economically distressed households, particularly those in areas of high unemployment, is up anywhere from 10 percent to 50 percent over last year-- 30 percent, on average -- according to a December 2008 survey of food banks by Feeding America;
- Prices for staple foods (such as bread, milk, eggs, peanut butter, canned tuna and apples) have risen an average of more than 10 percent, and energy costs are continuing to grow;
- The continuing recession and poor economic climate is raising uncertainty among donors who typically have been generous supporters of food banks and local food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.

We recognize the challenges you face in crafting a bill that meets our nation's needs and we respectfully request proper funding for our nation's anti-hunger safety programs. We appreciate your consideration of our request for additional TEFAP and Food Bank Infrastructure grant funding and we look forward to working with you on these and other pressing issues before the Committee.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



John Boozman
Member of Congress

Bruce L. Bradley

Yvette D. Clarke

Bryant

Eric J. Ture

Charles A. Pomplun

Pete Stark

Jim Langwin

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Lucille Lybelle Allard

Jan Lehty

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Bob Silver

Janet Harne

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Ami Casan

Rush Holt

Bart Gordon

Finla J. Sánchez

Addendum to Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) letter to
Committee on Agriculture Appropriations

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CB Engel

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Co-signers

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Mazie Hirono (addendum)

Charles B. Rangel (addendum)