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April 26, 2012

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Protect California's Nutrition Safety-Net in the Farm Bill

Dear Minority Leader Pelosi:

California Food Policy Advocates is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by improving their access to nutritious, affordable food. We do this by pursuing policies that strengthen the federal nutrition safety-net, particularly the SNAP program, known in California as CalFresh. Currently, CalFresh provides roughly \$7.1 billion in nutrition benefits to almost 3.9 million Californians.

Recent data from UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research indicates that 40% of low-income California adults across the state struggle with food insecurity. In a number of California counties this number is as high as 50%. In addition to providing households with income support, SNAP is the most effective response to food insecurity available to policymakers.

We are writing you today to urge you to work with the House Agriculture Committee and the California delegation in the House of Representatives to remove several damaging provisions from the Agricultural Reconciliation Act of 2012. The legislation proposes roughly \$33 billion in cuts to SNAP resulting directly in negative impacts on low-income Californians struggling to put adequate food on their family's table.

- Section 102 would accelerate the termination of temporary SNAP benefit increases provided to participants three years ago under the ARRA stimulus package. Terminating these benefits prematurely would reduce the food purchasing power of 3.9 million Californians by \$57 million monthly. All while California families are just beginning to slowly recover from the economic downturn.
- Section 103 would limit an enrollment tool known as "categorical eligibility" that allows households to accrue minimal savings (which are essential to long-term self-sufficiency)

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while still participating in SNAP. This will hurt 220,000 Californians, who currently receive \$385 million in federal nutrition benefits annually.

- Section 104 would eliminate California's newly adopted "Heat and Eat" initiative, which provides SNAP households with a nominal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit and simplifies paperwork for participants and administrators. Estimates indicate that when "Heat and Eat" is fully implemented in California as many as 200,000 households will see an average increase in benefits of about 13% or \$43 per month.
- Section 105 would cut federal funding for SNAP employment and training programs by 72 % by removing federal matching funds for job training and other employment programs for jobless SNAP participants, along with associated child care, transportation, and other work supports. This cut would make it more difficult for SNAP households that are unemployed to obtain jobs.

With nearly four million participants, SNAP provides critical support to low-income Californians. Despite recent growth in the SNAP caseload due to the economic downturn, California still has the lowest participation rate in the nation. Now is not the time to reverse California's recent progress to improve CalFresh access and participation.

SNAP is one of the strongest tools that policymakers' have to combat hunger; please help us preserve these essential benefits. We urge you to vote against the bill if these provisions are not removed.

If I can provide further information, don't hesitate to reach me at 510.433.1122x103 or george@cfpa.net.

Sincerely,



George Manalo-LeClair
Executive Director
California Food Policy Advocates