



Congregation Emanu-El



Ventura County's Food Bank
A Member of FEEDING AMERICA



San Francisco
Board of Supervisors
**Food Security
Task Force**



April 26, 2012

Dear Member of Congress,

As the Agriculture Committees in the House of Representatives and Senate begin work on the 2012 Farm Bill, we urge you to support proposals that both protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Nearly 3.9 million Californians rely on SNAP benefits to boost household resources and make it possible to put enough food on the table.

As members of a broad coalition of anti-hunger advocates we have expressed our concern with a number of proposals that have recently been considered and would have a significant negative impact on clients, such as the elimination of categorical eligibility and block granting of federal SNAP funding. CFPA will provide additional analyses of other such proposals that would compromise the strength of the SNAP program, in this particular letter we would like to highlight a proposed change to SNAP regulations that we have a unique connection to as supporters of recent state legislation, Assembly Bill 6 (Fuentes, D-Los Angeles), which enacted the "Heat and Eat" option in California.

The proposed change would restrict a state's ability to employ an option commonly referred to as "Heat and Eat". This option gives states the ability to provide SNAP households with a nominal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit. By providing households with this nominal LIHEAP benefit, states are able to simplify the benefit calculation process and increase benefit allotments for a significant number of households.

In the fall of 2011, California passed Assembly Bill 6 (Fuentes, D-Los Angeles) which requires the implementation of "Heat and Eat" in California by October of 2013. AB 6 had a long list of diverse supporters and received bipartisan backing as it moved through the legislature.

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. We believe the positive impact on SNAP benefit allotments for California households is significant. These benefits will help alleviate the ongoing pressures on household budgets as the economy slowly recovers and the job market improves.

Additionally, in combination with recent efforts within our state to streamline paperwork and ease the application process for clients and administrators, the "Heat and Eat" option will simplify the benefit calculation process for all households. This is particularly important for households whose verification of utility costs may be difficult, like seniors, the disabled, or those living in rural

communities. In addition, experiences in states that have already implemented the “Heat and Eat” option indicate that this simplification can also significantly reduce administrative costs. Options to streamline the administration of SNAP provide much needed relief as state and local administration budgets remain stagnant, if not reduced, in the face of increased need.

This is the time to strengthen and protect the features of SNAP that make it one of the most effective programs in combatting poverty and providing Americans with safety-net resources during tough times. This is not the time to restrict options to streamline the program or eliminate options that make SNAP more responsive to the needs of California households.

We urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to protect and strengthen SNAP by asking that you communicate to the members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees that eliminating the “Heat and Eat” option would have a significant negative impact on California families and that you oppose such action.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to serving the state of California.

Sincerely,

California Association of Food Banks
California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA)
California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC)
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco, CA
Food for People, Inc.
Food Share, Inc.
San Francisco Food Security Taskforce
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
St. Anthony Foundation
St. Joseph’s Family Center
Western Center on Law and Poverty

Questions? Contact
Alexis Fernandez
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food policy Advocates
510.433.1122 x111 | alexis@cfpa.net