

April 17, 2018

RE: Oppose the House Ag Committee Chairman's 2018 Farm Bill

Dear California Members of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture:

We are writing on behalf of California's anti-hunger community to express our concerns about the [2018 Farm Bill](#) released by Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, K. Michael Conaway (R-TX), late last week.

Food insecurity and hunger is a significant issue threatening the health, wellbeing and future opportunities of Americans of all ages from urban and rural communities alike. USDA's Economic Research Service reports that 42 million individuals nationwide—13 million of them children—experience food insecurity, including [12.8 percent of Californians](#). Many of these people turn to government and private programs to prevent hunger, but our local food pantries and congregate meal programs report they are already unable to meet the need that already exists.

While this high incidence of hunger is disgraceful, it would be far worse were it not for the nation's profoundly successful and cost-effective [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), known as [CalFresh in California](#).

SNAP is not only not only effective at preventing hunger and some of the worst outcomes of poverty, it also strengthens communities and retailers who depend on shoppers paying with SNAP when their income falls short. Since every \$1 billion in SNAP benefits redeemed generates \$97 million in farm cash receipts, which translates into [950 farm jobs and \\$32 million of income to farmers and hired farmworkers](#) and an increase [of 8,900-17,900 full-time equivalent jobs](#) in the general economy. Making cuts to SNAP will result in fewer jobs, especially in communities like those throughout California that rely on farming and food production industries.

The Chairman's proposed Farm Bill would cut aid from working families with high childcare expenses. It would shorten the SNAP three-month time limit to one month and apply it to a larger group of people, including older adults and families with children. While it purports to cushion the work requirement by providing every out-of-work or underemployed SNAP recipient the ability to participate in workfare, or free work, programs to avoid sanctions, it only funds these programs with a budget so small that it wouldn't even pay for a monthly bus pass for participants. Simply put, the Chairman's Farm Bill, if enacted, would erect new red-tape barriers to providing vital food assistance for the nearly 4 million California SNAP recipients who need it most and who live in [every California Congressional District](#).

We are asking California's Congressional Delegation to reject all proposals in the Chairman's Farm Bill that would result in reduced food assistance to Californians. Congress should be strengthening, not weakening, national anti-hunger programs.

This Letter is Co-signed by the Following Organizations

Statewide Organizations

California Association of Food Banks
California Food Policy Advocates
California Hunger Action Coalition
Children's Defense Fund - California
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
Meals on Wheels California
Western Center on Law and Poverty

Regional Organizations:

Alameda County Community Food Banks
Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano
Food for People, the Food Bank for

Humboldt County
Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Orange County Food Bank
St. Anthony Foundation – San Francisco
Sacramento Hunger Coalition
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Diego Hunger Advocacy Network
San Francisco Marin County Food Bank
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
University of California, Merced
Yolo Food Bank

cc:

Honorable Kevin McCarthy, U.S. House of Representatives, Majority Leader
Honorable Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of Representatives, Minority Leader
Honorable Michael Conaway, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
Honorable Collin C. Peterson, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
California Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
California Members of the U.S. Senate

For more information about this statement, contact: Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty at jbartholow@wclp.org; Andrew Cheyne, California Association of Food Banks at andrew@cafoodbanks.org; Kevin Aslanian at the Coalition of Welfare Rights Organizations at kevin.aslanian@ccwro.org; Cathy Senderling-McDonald, County Welfare Directors Association of California, csend@cwda.org; or, Jared Call, California Food Policy Advocates at jared@cfpa.net.