

March 28, 2008

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
123 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Bennett  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
188 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Bennett:

We ask for your continued support for funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) in the Fiscal Year 2009 Agriculture Appropriations bill. As you know, CSFP is a complement to—not a substitute for—the Food Stamp Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

We urge you to appropriate \$175 million to CSFP for FY09 to not only help providers maintain existing caseload, despite rising commodity costs, but to also help the program reach new clients and to expand into new states. In 2007, CSFP provided, on average, 473,000 food packages each month to mothers, infants, children, and low-income seniors across the nation. Last year, 93 percent of the recipients were elderly individuals with an income at or below \$13,273 per year. CSFP food packages are designed to supplement needed sources of nutrients typically lacking in recipients' diets, including protein, iron, zinc, and vitamins B-6 and B-12. CSFP providers also have been very cost efficient: the typical food package has a retail value between \$60 but costs the government of \$19 per participant per month.

For those indigent and often home-bound recipients food stamp vouchers are not an acceptable replacement to the program. CSFP packages are often a supplement to one's food stamp benefit. Eliminating the program would endanger the health of home-bound individuals and would mean many seniors would see a monthly food benefit of only \$20. The CSFP food package that enrollees currently receive has a retail value of \$60.

To meet these rising costs and to continue serving those challenged by hunger, we request that you fund this program at \$175 million for FY09. This funding level would allow the program to expand to 5 USDA approved states (Arkansas, Delaware, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Utah) and would serve an additional 116,000 individuals in states with existing CSFP programs.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request and look forward to working with you to ensure no American goes hungry.

Sincerely,