

May 2, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
133 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

As members of Michigan's communities providing support to our state's residents who face continuing economic challenges, we are writing to thank you for your ongoing leadership for the people we serve. As new voices are calling for changes to SNAP, we urge you to continue and strengthen your efforts to protect SNAP funding and program structure, as well as TEFAP funding. SNAP is one of our nation's most important hunger relief programs. TEFAP connects our nation's food products directly with those in need in temporary emergency situations.

As organizations who work with and support Michigan families, we see daily the benefits of SNAP. SNAP reaches 1.78 million of our state's most vulnerable residents. The program is designed to expand in times of economic hardship and decrease as people return to economic stability. Nationally, among the households receiving SNAP: 76% percent have a child, senior, or disabled member and 83% have a gross income below 100% of the poverty level. SNAP's eligibility requirements, including categorical eligibility, enable deserving people to receive SNAP while minimizing bureaucratic challenges for the applicants and costs and risks of errors for states' administrators. Studies report that the fraud and misuse rates for SNAP are far lower than for other types of safety net programs. We know the people we serve and believe they cannot endure additional financial hardship that will result if Congress cuts more from SNAP.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently issued a report on SNAP benefit adequacy that made clear that the program needs to increase benefits so people can afford a diet that is adequate and healthy. Michigan households, however, are already adjusting to a *reduction* in their SNAP grants due to the end of A.R.R.A. funding. Further cuts would make it even harder for families to afford a fresh and healthy diet.

SNAP funding is an investment in the future of Michigan, as well as the nation. SNAP helps assure that our children, our young adults, and our elderly, all eat nutritious diets. The benefits are measureable and long term: healthy diets improve educational performance and outcomes for children and enhance their life-time earning potential. Nutritious food purchased with SNAP reduces the risks -- and long-term costs -- of diet-related diseases.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's most recent study of food insecurity reported that 3.9 million Michiganders -- 1 in 5 people -- face food insecurity. SNAP enables Michigan's residents, who currently are unable to find employment or unable to secure jobs with sufficient incomes to cover their basic expenses, to stay healthy and stable enough to obtain and keep work -- by

providing funds for nutritious food that enables people to use their very limited resources for shelter, transportation, or job search. SNAP also assists people unable to work for pay – seniors and disabled Michigan residents.

In addition to protecting SNAP, we also ask that you encourage your colleagues to support full funding for the TEFAP program in FY2014 appropriations: \$250 million for TEFAP commodity purchases, full funding for the TEFAP Storage and Distribution program, and \$15 million for the Food Bank Infrastructure Grant program. The SNAP program benefits residents directly. TEFAP provides critically needed emergency food for people via the emergency food system – something that helps fill in gaps where SNAP is inadequate.

We are keenly aware of the vexing decisions that you and our nation's leadership must make concerning the budget. We are thankful for your respected leadership on behalf of our Michigan residents and your commitment to SNAP and TEFAP. Thank you for your support on this issue, and please let us know any ways in which we may provide you with support for these vital programs.

Sincerely yours,

Access of West Michigan

Big Brother Big Sisters of the Great Lakes Bay Region

Cabrini Clinic

Center for Civil Justice

Ennis Center for Children

First Ward Community Center

Free Clinics of Michigan

Food Bank Council of Michigan

Food Bank of Eastern Michigan

Food Bank of South Central Michigan

Food Gatherers

Forgotten Harvest

Genesee Health Plan

Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan

Greater Lansing Food Bank

Jewish Community Relations Council of Metropolitan Detroit

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes

The Manna Food Project

Maurice & Jane Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice

Michigan's Children

Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency

Michigan County Social Services Association

Michigan League for Public Policy

Michigan Peace Budget Coalition

National Association of Social Workers- Michigan Chapter

Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Saginaw County Community Action Committee

Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority

Senior Services/Midland County Council on Aging

Shiawassee United Way

Social Action Committee of the Unitarian

Universalist Church of Greater Lansing

TrueNorth Community Services

United Way for Southeastern Michigan