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REVIEW THE FEDERAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS, OVERSIGHT, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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CONTENTS

Page

Baca, Hon. Joe, a Representative in Congress from the State of California,
opening statement 1
prepared statement 47

Pomeroy, Hon. Earl, a Representative in Congress from the State of North Dakota,
opening statement 5

Davis, Hon. Lincoln, a Representative in Congress from the State of Tennessee,
opening statement 6

Lampson, Hon. Nick, a Representative in Congress from the State of Texas,
opening statement 7
prepared statement 50

Kagen, Hon. Steve, a Representative in Congress from the State of Wisconsin,
opening statement 8
prepared statement 50

Boyda, Hon. Nancy, a Representative in Congress from the State of Kansas,
opening statement 8

Peterson, Hon. Collin C., a Representative in Congress from the State of Minnesota,
prepared statement 49

Bonner, Hon. Jo, a Representative in Congress from the State of Alabama,
opening statement 2
prepared statement 48

Moran, Hon. Jerry, a Representative in Congress from the State of Kansas,
opening statement 5

King, Hon. Steve, a Representative in Congress from the State of Iowa,
opening statement 6

Boustany, Hon. Charles W., Jr., a Representative in Congress from the State of Louisiana,
opening statement 7

Goodlatte, Hon. Bob, a Representative in Congress from the State of Virginia,
opening statement 4
prepared statement 49

Schmidt, Hon. Jean, a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio,
opening statement 9

WITNESSES

Montanez-Johner, Hon. Nancy, Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, accompanied by Hon. Kate Coler, Deputy Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Hon. Clarence Carter, Deputy Administrator, Food Stamp Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
oral statement 10
prepared statement 87

Weill, James, D., President, Food Research and Action Center,
oral statement 26
prepared statement 90

Chilton, Mariana, PhD., MPH, Principal Investigator, The Philadelphia Grow Project at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children,
oral statement 28
prepared statement 114

Murguia, Janet, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza,
oral statement 30
prepared statement 129

Page

Massey, Rene, Director, Baldwin County Department of Human Resources,
oral statement 32
prepared statement 136
Brunk, Gary, Executive Director, Kansas Action for Children,
oral statement 34
prepared statement 138
Wade, Kim McCoy, J.D., Executive Director, California Association of Food Banks,
oral statement 36
prepared statement 140

SUBMITTED MATERIAL

Emerson, Hon. Jo Ann, Member of Congress from the State of Missouri and the Honorable James P. McGovern, Member of Congress from the State of Massachusetts, submitted statement 50
Chilton, Dr. Mariana, PhD, MPH, Drexel University School of Public Health, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, submitted statement 71
Bhatia, Eduardo, Executive Director, Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration on behalf of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, submitted statement 75
American Dietetic Association, Chicago, Illinois, submitted statement 79
Society for Nutrition Education, Indianapolis, Indiana, submitted statement .. 82

HEARING TO REVIEW THE FEDERAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS,
OVERSIGHT, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in room 1302 of the Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Joe Baca (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Baca, Pomeroy, Davis, Lampson, Kagen, Boyda, Bonner, Moran, King, Boustany, and Goodlatte (ex officio).

Staff present: Christy Birdsong, Rob Larew, John Riley, Sharon Rusnak, Lisa Shelton, April Slayton, Debbie Smith, Stephanie Myers, and Jamie Weyer.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOE BACA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. BACA. I would like to call the hearing on the Department of Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry to order at this point. I would like to welcome each and every one of you to our first hearing. I would like to first of all start off by making an opening statement and call on my minority ranking member to make the opening statement, and then I will just ask the members present just to make brief remarks, since they are here. First of all, I would like to welcome you to the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Department of Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry for the 110th Congress. I look forward to a busy and productive session.

As we look at the Farm Bill, all of us know that we have huge responsibility to the American families and farmers, but none of us have obligations as important as the reauthorization of the Food Stamp Program. The food stamps are one of our country's greatest safety net programs and it helps to feed 26 million legal residents, most of which are children, senior citizens, disabled and those living in poverty. And we know that it impacts 36 million people in the United States, and that is 11 million people that are going hungry in the United States overall.

For over 70 years, our government has taken on the moral responsibility to feed those who cannot feed themselves and this year

marks the 30th anniversary of the passage of the 1977 Food Stamp Act and it is appropriate that we mark this anniversary with the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. We must work to ensure that our country's long tradition of combating poverty, hunger and disease through a strong nutrition title and Food Stamp Program. Over the years, the Food Stamp Program has changed and grown with the needs of our society. Many people misunderstand how Food Stamp works and how effective the program is. To help correct its mistakes and views, today's hearing will focus specifically on how the Food Stamp supports the childhood health and nutrition.

This topic is near to my heart, as I represent the 43rd Congressional District, where Hispanics are twice as likely to suffer from diabetes and the rate amongst groups is one of six children that is affected by diabetes. Studies have shown that one in four Hispanics, the ages of six to eleven, is obese, so when you look at the average rate, that is one of six children, other than Hispanics, have obesity. Neither of these statistics are acceptable and they need our attention now and I think all of us are very much concerned, not only here but nationwide, of the effects it has on all of us and it is a concern, not only for us. But as citizens of the wealthiest country in the world, I believe that we have moral obligation, as a public servant, to provide good nutritious food to all of our people. But even if you don't agree with my philosophy, there is a strong economic argument to be made.

The World Bank estimates that 12 percent of our Nation's healthcare spending is related to obesity. Twelve percent of Nation's healthcare that is spent is related to obesity. That equals $90 billion each year, $90 billion. My fellow Members of Congress might be interested to also know that almost half of that amount is being paid with Federal dollars through Medicare and Medicaid. Good nutrition isn't just a feel-good issue, it affects our budget, our economy, our educational system and the health of our Nation.

Before we hear from our distinguished witnesses, I want to thank the members of this subcommittee. I deeply appreciate your heartfelt interest in the children's health and nutrition. Each of you who attended our organizational meeting last Monday expressed your concerns about this issue and I look forward to working with each of you to make the Food Stamp Program a pro-nutrition, pro-healthy lifestyle program that is responsible to the needs of our kids and working families.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Now I call on Ranking Member Bonner to make his opening statements. And if there is no objection, we would like to have Ms. Schmidt join the subcommittee today. Is there any objection to having Ms. Schmidt? Hearing no objection, we will have Ms. Schmidt sit at the table. Ranking member, Mr. Bonner.

STATEMENT OF HON. JO BONNER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Mr. BONNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. Let me begin by thanking today's witnesses who have agreed to come to testify before the committee regarding the Federal Food Stamp Program and its impact on children's health. I am pleased that we were able to hear that we will be able to hear from such a distin-

guished group of individuals and we all appreciate your willingness to testify. I am especially pleased that one of my own constituents, Mrs. Rene Massey, will appear before us during the second panel and offer her expertise as Director of the Department of Human Resources in Baldwin County, Alabama.

The Federal Food Stamp Program, as the chairman indicated, was established over 40 years ago and has played an important role in food security for low-income households throughout the United States. A great number of individuals and families in our country depend on these benefits. In fact, according to the most recent data available, over 45,000 households in Alabama's 1st Congressional District are currently receiving Food Stamp benefits. That is almost 18 percent of the total households in my district and I am sure many of our colleagues would have similar numbers.

The purpose of today's hearing obviously is to review how this program impacts the health of our children. It could not come at a better time, given the obesity crisis that our Nation is facing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites two surveys, one from 1976 to 1980 and the other from 2003 to 2004, to illustrate the prevalence of overweight children. Between those two timeframes, the prevalence of overweight children, ages two to five, increased from five to over 13 percent, for those aged six to eleven, the prevalence increased from six and one-half percent to 18.8 percent, and for those 12 to 19 years of age, the prevalence increased from five percent to 17.4 percent. It is absolutely imperative that we do what we can to help curb this epidemic. Educating our children with regard to what is healthy versus what is not healthy is one of the things that we can do to help in this effort. Like many young boys growing up, I know I didn't always like to hear from my mom about the importance of eating your broccoli, but that is exactly the type of education that we need in order to be successful. And as now, today, the father of two young children, I know how hard that challenge can be. However, we must work to educate, in addition to providing our children the types of nutritious foods that they need in their daily diets.

USDA, in the summary of the 2007 Farm Bill proposals, cites that children under 18 years of age generally consume 50 percent or less of the recommended levels of fruit and vegetables. The summary goes on to say that providing increased fruit and vegetable options in the Food Assistance Programs can help increase consumption as well as improve the quality of many American diets. I agree with this assessment and know that we need to work to improve the nutrition aspect of the Food Stamp Program as we move forward in the 2007 Farm Bill process.

Our subcommittee's first hearing of the 110th Congress will no doubt provide some valuable insight as we address this important topic. I look forward to hearing from USDA and the various individuals from around the country who will testify today to share some of their knowledge and experience in the field. So once again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the time this morning to provide an opening statement and I know that our colleagues on our side look forward to working with you and the other members of our subcommittee on this and many other important topics of interest. Thank you.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. At this time, we would like to ask Mr. Goodlatte if he would like to make a statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOB GOODLATTE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF VIRGINIA

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for holding this hearing and I will submit a written statement for the record, but I do want to note that this is a very important part of the Farm Bill. More than 60 percent of the mandatory spending that is done by this committee goes for nutrition programs and I think it is very important that these programs operate effectively to provide nutritious food to those who are most in need. We ought to look at it from the standpoint of making sure that the programs are preserved and continue, but also from the standpoint that they operate effectively. The Food Stamp Program in particular has had a long and checkered history, going through periods of time where it was very much the subject of a lot of fraud and scandal. There is still a great deal of waste and fraud in the Food Stamp Program and we should always work to make sure that we are rooting out those things and improving the program.

I had the opportunity to chair this subcommittee for over six years and during that time, we introduced measures to require that. For example, people who were dead, whose nutritional needs may be overrated, were checked against, for example, the Social Security rolls to make sure that they were continuing to draw food stamps after their demise. We do the same thing, we put in requirements that prisoners, who are getting three squares a day in the slammer, not be also drawing food stamps, and each year many, many millions of dollars were being paid to people who were in prison and we required that the prison rolls be checked against the food stamp rolls by the States. These have improved the situation significantly.

In addition, we need to make sure that the people who are qualifying as food stamp redeemers are indeed grocery stores selling food stamps, because there have been a lot of problems with that over the years. The Electronic Benefits Transfer Program, the EBT cards, which have not only helped to reduce fraud, but also to restore some dignity to the people who participate in the Food Stamp Program, have helped in that regard, but they are also subject to fraud and abuse. So making absolutely sure that this program works well is very important.

Mr. Chairman, as you may know, I am a very strong supporter of the Food Bank Program and the Federal government support for that, which is a tiny, tiny fraction of what we spend on food stamps. It is estimated that this year we will spend about $33 billion on food stamps, less than $190 million on the TEFAP, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, for food banks. Food banks are wonderful grassroots operations that I think get far more out of a dollar than any other food program. Hundreds of volunteer organizations, civic groups, church organizations and so on, will work with each food bank and there are hundreds of food banks around the country and most of them affiliated with the America's Second Harvest food program. These systems reach people and not only

bring them a box of food to help them get through the week or the month, but also help them with other things. It is community helping community and neighbors helping neighbors. When somebody brings that box of food, they are not just bringing a box of food. They may be finding out whether somebody in the family needs a ride to work, somebody needs a ride to the doctor, somebody needs help finding a job, somebody needs help tutoring in the school, and it is a wonderful program and I would hope that we will be able to not only continue to support it through The Emergency Food Assistance Program, but find ways to increase that support.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much for the opportunity and I look forward to the witnesses' testimony.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Goodlatte. All members will, if you can, you know, submit for the record your statement and hopefully that will give ample time to the witnesses to testify, but I will allow you to make a short, just a brief introduction of yourself and a short statement and we will alternate back and forth and I will start with Mr. Pomeroy.

STATEMENT OF HON. EARL POMEROY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. POMEROY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been on the Agriculture Committee for several sessions, six I think. This is my seventh. I mean, I have never been able to serve on this subcommittee, so I am delighted to be on this subcommittee. And I think, as we look at the work in front of us, relative to the nutrition title, we ought to evaluate carefully, as Ranking Member Goodlatte has suggested, whether there is more fraud and waste that can be identified and rooted out. We certainly ought to applaud and support the efforts made involving the nonprofit sector to respond to hunger in our communities. But there is an undeniable fact that we are going to have to come squarely to grips with it. The food insecurity figures are appalling. We have got more people either hungry, or one meal away from being hungry, than is acceptable for a Nation of our size and wealth. And this isn't a pass the hat at the basketball game. Let us get some money and buy some people hot dogs. We have got to get real serious about a national strategy to deal with food insecurity and that is going to mean a leadership role by this subcommittee, developing the best nutrition title we can in the upcoming Farm Bill. There is no shirking the Federal government's responsibility here. We have got too many people hungry or on the brink of being hungry and qualify, therefore, as food insecure under the data and we need to respond to it. Thank you.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Mr. Moran.

STATEMENT OF HON. JERRY MORAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Thank you for scheduling this hearing, you and Mr. Bonner. I appreciate the opportunity to listen and learn from the witnesses today, both from USDA and from our second panel. I particularly want to point out

that we have two Kansans who are going to be providing us with information and I appreciate Mr. Brunk being here on behalf of the Kansas Association for Children. Excuse my words. And Janet Murguia, the President of National Council of La Raza. And I appreciate particularly Mr. Brunk's testimony, pointing out the long history that Kansans have in trying to meet the needs of those who face hunger each and every day, both in our own country and around the world. So I look forward to hearing the testimony and I thank you for conducting the hearing.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Mr. Davis.

STATEMENT OF HON. LINCOLN DAVIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Mr. DAVIS. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments and I will make those very brief, but thank you, Mr. Chairman and the ranking member, for having this hearing today and those who will testify. As I look in this room, I think the majority of us and probably every one of us are food secure and perhaps have never known the pangs of hunger. I think it is important, as we go through the process of the hearings and as we do the Farm Bill, that we realize there are those in many rural areas and in urban areas of our country that they still feel the pangs of hunger. And it is important that, as a country that has the moral fiber that we have, that we fulfill that commitment to the moral standards that we have established for ourselves. I look forward to the hearings.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Mr. King.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE KING, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF IOWA

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you holding the hearing today and I appreciate the witnesses and I look forward to their testimony. I will have to step out in just a few minutes, which I regret. I wanted to express something here from a bit of a constitutional perspective and I would ask us to keep this in mind as we make these deliberations, and remember also that FDR was the person that defeated Iowan Herbert Hoover, so I have to be a little more critical, perhaps, of FDR. But he established the four freedoms and two were constitutional and two were not. Those four freedoms were freedom of speech, freedom to worship, those were both constitutional freedoms, and the other two were the freedom from want and freedom from fear. Those are extra constitutional rights established by FDR and sometimes put into the mindset of Americans as if they are constitutional.

And now I hear another phrase called food insecurity and it occurs to me that we have gone from constitutional rights to FDR's manufactured rights about freedom from want and freedom from fear, and now we are talking about freedom from fear of want. That is quite a progression to do here in about, oh, 70 or 80 years and it is just curious to me how the body politic and how our language is so carefully crafted to establish the perception of a right

and then we flow along with it, without looking back into our constitutional underpinnings.

That said, I do think we need to take a look across this country and see how we can help those who are in need and I don't take the stand that we have a constitutional duty to do that, but I think we have a humanitarian interest in this and I am certainly going to be part of that humanitarian interest to take a good look at those in need and see what we can do with those food stamps. And I thought it was important for us and instructive to look at it also from a constitutional perspective.

Thank you.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Mr. Lampson.

STATEMENT OF HON. NICK LAMPSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I do appreciate the hearing and all of the witnesses who will be joining us today, and I will submit my statement for the record. I would mention that, unbelievably to me, about ¼ of all the children in my State of Texas rely on food stamps and that the value of the Food Stamp Program has been dwindling significantly over time, making too often people to rely on charities to provide or to subsidize their food stamp allotment, which creates a significant problem, particularly when you face something like what happened in Texas and along the Gulf Coast last year with storms like Katrina and Rita. We still have some 80,000 people in Houston alone who are struggling. We were caught more or less flat-footed, I think, and unprepared and so I would ask and hope that we will hear some comments. I implore you to use this disaster as a catalyst to reform the food aid plans for our future crisis situations. And again, I will submit my remarks for the record, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for the hearing.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Mr. Boustany.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR., A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to join you and Ranking Member Bonner on the subcommittee and I look forward to hearing the witnesses. A couple points. I am glad to see the emphasis on childhood obesity because, as a cardiac surgeon, I saw the ravages of a lifetime of obesity and this is a critically important area and it is an area that we need to make some gains in to reduce childhood obesity, because I think, clearly, dietary habits are established early on in life and the consequences are dire as a result and so this is something we need to focus on.

My colleague from Texas mentioned the two hurricanes. My district was hit by Hurricane Rita but also had many, many people who evacuated from the New Orleans area into my district as a result of Katrina, so we sort of had a double hit in my congressional district and the TEFAP program very important. The food bank has served our State well and I look forward to seeing how we can

improve these programs and I am very eager to hear the witnesses. Thank you.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Mr. Kagen.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE KAGEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN

Mr. KEGAN. Thank you, Chairman Baca, and I am very happy to be here with my fellow colleagues and even if it is a cardiovascular surgeon, who I hope I get to work with just in a political sense and not a medical sense. I am very pleased to be here today and work with people everywhere who believe that good government can make a real difference in people's lives. The Food Stamp Program rose from a very humble beginning to become one of the greatest programs we have in our government to administer. It has been a very successful program. And as we have seen on a grand scale in response to what my colleague Nick had referred to, Hurricane Katrina, it has made a significant difference in keeping people not just well fed, but alive. This program exists really solely to assist those who are in need, and as a physician, I deeply understand the value of preventative medicine and this program illustrates this tenet perfectly. I agree with my colleagues that obesity is not just a problem in children, it is also a problem for all of us here in Congress, so I am going to help put Congress on a diet while I am here. I look forward to working with everyone and I hope to be a leader on this committee, along with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to make this program more effective and more efficient in every way. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Gentlewoman Boyda.

STATEMENT OF HON. NANCY E. BOYDA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

Ms. BOYDA. Thank you so much, Chairman Baca, and thanks for calling this. It is such an important issue right now in my State as well as, I am sure, in every State. The number of children who are in poverty just keeps escalating every year. I think we should be alarmed by that. I applaud the Food Stamp Program. I will support the Food Stamp Program. But let me just tell you a story that I heard the other day that I thought was remarkable. It was questioning why I voted to raise the minimum wage and said why don't we just send more food stamps to people or more aid? And while I applaud food stamps, the fact is that we need to have jobs that keep families independent and keep families working hard in that sense of self-sufficiency and hope that is there, and I think we need to look at the entire economic package as we look at this and food stamps play an extremely key role in making sure that we do not have hungry children and families. But I think we need to step back and say why are the number of people who are needing food stamps rising so drastically, and what can we do as a Nation to stop that trend?

Let me just say that I am happy to be one of two women, with my colleague Jean Schmidt. I think it is kind of interesting, Jean, that we are the only women on this subcommittee which basically deals with children's nutrition. So I am very happy that our voices

will be heard on this, as well as I know that all of you guys care about this as well, too. But a deep, deep concern about our families and how nutrition is going. Again, too, I am so happy to have Gary Brunk here from Topeka, Kansas, who works for and is the Executive Director of the Kansas Action for Children Network and has been in my face very often, telling me about why this is so important, and I am just thrilled that you are a playing a key role and advocating for our children and for our families in this regard. So thank you very much and I look forward to working with my colleagues on this important issue.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Gentlewoman Schmidt, would you like to make a comment?

STATEMENT OF HON. JEAN SCHMIDT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Ms. SCHMIDT. Thank you so much. I will be brief since I am technically not a member of this subcommittee, but a member of the full committee.

Mr. BACA. We realize that.

Ms. SCHMIDT. I am really here today to listen to what the Food Stamp Program has as far as nutrition, corrective nutritional opportunities for our working poor and most especially our children. One of my concerns with the Food Stamp Program is that we give an amount of stamps for an individual to purchase food for their families and on tight incomes, when you go to the grocery store and you look at an apple that is maybe 80 or 90 cents per apple and you look at a box of Little Debbie's that are 99 cents, it is a lot easier to buy the Little Debbie's, because it fills up the tummy a whole lot more quickly, but nutritionally, it is not very, very sound. I am trying to work out some sort of an idea that would give these working poor families the opportunity to have the apple and to be able to afford the apple or the banana or the pear or fruits and vegetables that are so important to our dietary supplement, and I haven't worked out the details yet, but that is why I am here today, sir, to listen to what is going on and hopefully be able to address it in the future. Thank you so much.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. We would like to welcome our first panel and I would like to first start by introducing them. The Honorable Nancy Montanez-Johner, who is the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC, will be accompanied by Honorable Kate Coler, Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service of the United States Department of Ag, and then the Honorable Clarence Carter, the Deputy Administrator for Food and Service Program, USDA, Washington, DC. And at this time, I would like to have the Under Secretary, Nancy.

STATEMENT OF HON. NANCY MONTANEZ-JOHNER, UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SERVICES, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ACCOMPANIED BY HON. KATE COLER, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SERVICES, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AND HON. CLARENCE CARTER, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR FOOD STAMP PROGRAM, USDA

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Thank you and good morning. The Food and Nutrition Service's mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger, in partnership with cooperating organizations, by providing children and low-income individuals with access to food, a healthful diet and nutrition education, in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. Together, our 15 assistance programs serve one in five Americans and form our Nation's first line of defense against hunger.

The Department of Agriculture commits about 60 percent of its annual budget to these programs. While the Food Stamp Program is the Nation's primary nutrition assistance program, you may be familiar with some of our other programs, such as the National School Lunch Program, the Breakfast Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, commonly called WIC. More than 30 million school children participate in the School Lunch Program and nearly 10 million participate in the School Breakfast Program, and more than eight million participate in the WIC Program. Just over 26 million low-income individuals participate in the Food Stamp Program every month and about half of those are children. In 2004, 60 percent of those who were eligible to participate in the program did so. This compares with 53 percent in 2001 and in the past four years, 6.6 million more low-income children and families have entered the program. Families participating in the Food Stamp Program spend more on food and participating in the program increases the availability of food nutrients in the home.

We aggressively promote food stamp participation among those who are eligible. These efforts include a national media campaign that uses radio advertising in areas with low participation rates, and public service announcements that can be used by local food stamp offices and community and faith-based outreach providers. Partnerships are key to achieving our goals and we maintain strong, active relationships nationwide. This includes State government, local food stamp offices, anti-hunger organizations, food banks, faith and community-based organizations and food retailers. We provide a variety of outreach tools to our partners to increase participation. We also tailor our efforts to reach certain eligibility populations. For example, we have launched a three-year local community outreach campaign to reach eligible Spanish-speaking Americans and we are targeting other underserved populations, such as the elderly. We are committed to increasing access to food and to providing nutrition education to program participants. Overweight and obesity are critical issues for every part of our population and addressing these problems early life is critical. Our food stamp nutrition education efforts support this.

The Food Stamp Program is an important, often times a critical benefit to low-income households, not only to provide food, but also to provide the nutrition education that can form lifelong behaviors. Each year, we award grants to States and faith and community-based organizations to educate eligible participants about the nutrition benefits of the Food Stamp Program. Mr. Chairman, we wish to expand the nutrition education efforts that accompany the delivery of our nutrition assistance programs. We recently announced the 2007 Farm Bill proposals that increase access to the Food Stamp Program and expand nutrition education efforts by investing $100 million in grants to address the rising rates of obesity.

The proposed Farm Bill includes new mandatory funding to purchase $500 million in fruits and vegetables over 10 years for the School Meals Program. It also asks for $2.75 billion over the next 10 years to purchase fruits and vegetables for our other nutrition assistance programs. Lastly, Mr. Chairman, we feel it is important to note that the President is very committed to these programs. The Administration is requesting a record high of $59 billion in its 2008 budget to continue our nutrition assistance to America. This represents more than a 70 percent increase since 2001.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your interest in the Food Stamp Program and our efforts to provide nutritious food to all of those who are eligible to participate, as well as our efforts to combat the significant problem of overweight and obesity in America. We are happy to be here and we are grateful and we are happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Montanez-Johner appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Next, we have Kate Coler. Okay. Then what we will do, then, is each of the members will be recognized, based on the time that they arrived and that is how we will ask them to ask questions. You will have five minutes on the total time. We will begin with myself asking the question, then the minority leader will ask the next question, and I will start with myself. According to Under Secretary Johner, according to your figures, it states that you are able to connect eligible people to the Food Stamp Program with a variety of degrees of success. The average State service is about 50 percent of the working families, but the range is from as low as 34 percent in California to as high as 78 percent in Tennessee. What is it that States are doing to ensure that better services are done, which is question one, and what is the USDA doing to promote better practices?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again, the participation rates are very important to us and it is a critical issue and that is one of the things that we are doing to partner more closely with the States to promote that because, obviously, as you just stated, some States are doing better than others and that is why we are looking at our level. We are looking at outreach strategies, especially, to the underserved populations. We are focusing on all Americans, but especially Hispanics and the elderly, because those numbers are very low. And I am going to let Clarence talk a little bit more in some detail, but I just wanted to let you know of some of the things that we have in place. We have an outreach strategist who is trying to coordinate or attempting to coordi-

nate. There are a lot of good things that are happening across the Nation and we are trying to coordinate that and have better coordination efforts here at headquarters, so that we can look at what works and then maybe do we invest in that and expand that across the Nation? So this way, that there are some standards, some consistencies within our outreach efforts.

But I am going to let—and also the media—I know. I kind of get excited about this. The media campaign is also another piece. Last year alone, we had almost 1700 events to promote the Food Stamp Program and the other programs. We also have an 800 number that we have here that people can call to get information that would be more specific to their States. We also have a prescreening where people can get on and find out if they could possibly be eligible for food stamps, because I believe one of the biggest myths that is out there is that people don't believe that they are eligible for food stamps or they don't know about it. So Clarence, do you have anything else you want to add?

Mr. CARTER. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and committee members. Just a little illumination on some of the things that we do from an outreach perspective. We have an outreach coalition where we bring together partners from all across the Nation to look at best practices and how we might be able to support States' efforts in increasing outreach activities. We also have a set of outreach grants. We have just put out another million dollars this year in grants to local community agencies that focus on particular parts of our constituency to try to increase access to the Food Stamp Program. And as the Under Secretary just mentioned, our 3-year national media campaign it is a very, if you would, targeted approach to attempt to spread the message to every potential eligible individual that this most necessary assistance is there for them to take advantage of, if that is what they choose to do so.

Mr. BACA. Have you been able to measure why? You know, you indicated that some States are doing better than others. Have you been able to measure why some States are doing better in their outreach versus some of the other States in what kind of programs that they have that have been effective?

Mr. CARTER. Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. We do something that we also call a program access review and we go into local agencies and we look at how those local agencies are complying with standards and some of things that they have been doing to begin to identify best practices. So we do have some sense of what does work and what doesn't work and we try to share those best practices. But we do have some very intimate understanding of what goes on in local agencies.

Mr. BACA. Because the comparison would be different because of when you look at California with 37 million people compared to some of the other States that are a lot smaller, so it is a lot easier in terms of the promotion and the outreach. And California has one of the worse participation rates in the country, particularly among working families. Why do you think that the poor working families in California do not participate in this program?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. I think I am going to lead you to the modernization piece, because that is where I think this is an exciting move. We really do support and encourage States to move to-

wards streamlining and modernizing and that is, I have seen a couple of sites and one in particular is an employer that I have seen. Working families, they have working hours, so it is hard for them to get to the office and a lot of your offices are open from 8:00 to 5:00. There are more States, I guess, participating in this now as we continue to move forward. But they are expanding their office hours. They are using online applications. They are doing the data imaging piece, where they can actually scan their documents that they need. And they have 24/7 call centers that they would be able to call in their information and find out about the status. So we are really encouraging that to happen in our States. And again, Florida has a pretty good model that I have been at and it was just awesome, because you can go any time of the night. They have over 2700 sites, where it could be your local church, your school, your library, where you can go in an do an online application.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you. You know, I support the name change of Food Stamp Program. Please tell the members how you feel the name change would be beneficial.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. The Food Stamp Program no longer accurately portrays the mission of the program. We don't use food stamps anymore and as one congressman mentioned, we have EBT cards and those are electronic benefit cards and they work very well. And so the mission is more about the Food Assistance Program along with food nutrition and education. So we would like to change the name so that it really does portray the mission. And also, there is a stigma attached to that and we believe that is why some of our elderly population, they do not want to participate in this, because they see this as a welfare program.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you. One final question. Besides the need for higher benefits, what can we in Congress do to more effectively address the child hunger in America?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. I think that, with the Farm Bill proposals, I think we have made some things more accessible or easy for the families to access, excluding the retirements, excluding the approved IRS savings account, also the deduction on child care and excluding military combat pay, which would make it easier for families to access the programs. So I think the proposals that we have in the Farm Bill would be very helpful.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Bonner.

Mr. BONNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Under Secretary, one of the points that I made in my opening statement is the need for better childhood nutritional education in order to promote a healthier lifestyle. Many of our colleagues have said similar things. I was pleased to see, as a part of the 2007 Farm Bill proposal, that recommendations within the Food Stamp Program are there to support healthy and nutritious lifestyles. Based on these recommendations in the USDA's Farm Bill proposal, could you elaborate a little further about how we can continue to improve the nutrition education effort for our children in this country?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. I will start off with the $10 million, the grants, the $100 million grants that I was talking about for the obesity. We are very excited about that, with that proposal, because that would encourage, again, community and faith-based, other States, to come up with ways, innovative ways, how can combat

that? But with the other Farm Bill proposals, we have the fruit. Obviously, the dietary guidelines, the 2005 dietary guidelines, recommend consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and that is probably all Americans, that we need to do a better job with that. I can tell you that the nutrition education in the school system, it is getting better and I can let Kate talk a little bit in more details on this. But I can tell you, personally, I have visited many schools and it was very rewarding and satisfying to see young kids, I mean, we are talking little kindergarteners on up, and they understand what kind of fruits and vegetables make you grow and what makes you glow. I mean, they understand about the colors. You know, My Pyramid is also a very useful tool that they use in the school system and also our nutrition education guidelines are for mothers and children. So again, it focuses on the family. So Kate, do you have anything?

Ms. COLER. The only thing I would add is that the Food Stamp Program has nutrition education as a component of the program and it is an allowable expense for States to have under their administrative costs. There is a 50/50 match and we have worked with all States to develop nutrition education plans specifically geared for the Food Stamp Program. But also, we have had an effort to have the food stamp nutrition education plans coordinate with other nutrition education activities in the States. We call them SNAPs, or State Nutrition Action Plans, where the WIC Program coordinates with the school program that coordinates with the Food Stamp Program and other programs that are funded through HHS. So we are all working off of some consistent messages, based on the dietary guidelines, to get some consistency and key messages out. We have seen funding for this grow. It is dependent upon the States' dedication to it. It is a 50/50 match, so we reimburse the States. But for fiscal year 2007, Federal expenditures in this are about $275 million. And so building that consistency of message and making sure that is available to food stamp recipients is very important.

Mr. BONNER. Shifting gears, by all accounts, the welfare reform legislation that passed in the mid 1990s, it has been hailed as a significant success. The Republicans claim it a success when we were in the majority. President Clinton claimed it as a success when he was in office. And the statistics show that it did help reduce the welfare rolls by as much as 60 percent over the last decade. What impacts specifically can the Department share with us in terms of people enrolling for food stamps as a correlation to the reduced dependency on welfare?

Mr. CARTER. Congressman Bonner, one of the things that we have seen is a shift in the characteristics of the food stamp population. If you look at that population pre-welfare reform, it was about 21 percent of all individuals on the Food Stamp Program had some sort of earned incomes. They were working. That has increased to almost 29 percent and we see this as a work support program. What happens is, as individuals go to work, then you have a Food Stamp Program that allows them to help support their ability to work. So we have seen some important changes in the characteristics of the Food Stamp Program that allow this to be support for working families.

Ms. COLER. In the Farm Bill proposals, that is why we have the proposals to exclude the retirement accounts from your assets, because that really does target working families. More people are on the Food Stamp Program actually rely on a paycheck than rely on cash welfare and that is underserved populations as well. Many people have this perception that if they have a job, they are just automatically not eligible for the Food Stamp Program. We are targeting those low-income people, working very closely with community organizations to get that message out. But the average duration on the Food Stamp Program is less than a year. It is about eight months and the asset limits right now do sort of add an extra burden on families. They would have to deplete those accounts in order to qualify and that is why the President's proposal wants to exclude this.

Mr. BONNER. Thank you very much.

Mr. BACA. Thank you, Mr. Bonner. Mr. Lampson.

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Secretary, in your testimony, you talked about how Food Stamp Program integrity has been improving and that States are issuing benefits with greater accuracy. My State of Texas has been testing ways to modernize the enrollment process for food stamps through better use of technology and by allowing families to apply over the phone and on the Internet. While I support making the Food Stamp Program more efficient and more accessible, Texas has experienced some very serious problems related to the effort. Their so-called privatized effort has led to serious problems. Thousands of families face delays in getting their benefits during a pilot of this new system last year and the error rates have gone up noticeably and I am assuming the same thing is happening in some other States as well. What oversight will USDA exercise in Texas and other States to ensure that changes to the enrollment process for food stamps are thoroughly tested and do not jeopardize program access or program integrity?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Thank you, Congressman. That is an important issue for us and I will go ahead and turn this over to Clarence, but I would like to say a few things. The food stamp and the error and fraud are high profile issues for FNS and also for the Department. Again, this is a strong performance in the area that is important for us as the President management agenda and we are very happy and proud of the fact that our payment accuracy rate right now is 94.2 percent, which demonstrates a lot work between the States and the Federal government. But I understand your concerns in Texas and that is something that we are monitoring and Clarence has been very involved in that, so I am going to go ahead and let him answer the details.

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Congressman Lampson, I would begin by saying that I think that the Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service exercised its oversight role, with regard to Texas, very diligently. We worked with Texas every step of the way to understand what it was that they were about to do. We even decided to withhold funding, to only allow funding to be incremental so that we could test their model. When we began to work with Texas, when we talked about the notion of a pilot, they rejected that. They wanted to go

full ahead, but we said, "no, you have to pilot this." And then, as we monitored the pilot and explained that we were not seeing the kinds of results and were not prepared to release any additional dollars, then Texas began to retrench. So I think that we actually are monitoring an oversight in a very diligent way there.

The other thing I would suggest is that, in Texas, I think the problem, if you would, was there really was an attempt to do too much too soon with a new eligibility system, a new process and also closing a significant number of offices. There were just much too many processes that were crunched into one application. And so we think that, quite frankly, the State is moving smartly to attempt to correct the problem and we understand that there has already been one, if you will, reduction in the privatization contract, the contract they had with the vendor, and there are others in discussion. So we think that we exercised our oversight properly and we will do this with every other State.

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you very much. I yield the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman, to Mr. Pomeroy.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Pomeroy.

Mr. POMEROY. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I have a commitment and I have to leave this hearing, but I wanted to get this question in. It involves the disturbing coincidence of a couple of events, first, the increased number of those reporting to be food insecure, now north of 35 million in this country, and the President's proposal to eliminate categorical eligibility. Now this would kick out of the program 329,000 people nationally, nearly 1500 in North Dakota, and the director of North Dakota food stamps has characterized this move as devastating. Do you support the move to kick out categorically eligible individuals that are presently eligible for food stamps, and what is the rationale?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Congressman, what we do is, what we want to look at, again, at those who have the greatest need. Those that are currently, the categorical eligibility are for those who are receiving TANF of non-cash benefits. And so we are looking at, if they meet the eligibility guidelines, they can still apply for food stamps. At this point, we have folks out there who are not receiving, again, the cash TANF benefits. They are getting food stamps and they get on the program because they might have a brochure that has been funded by TANF funds. And so, again, trying to go back with how do you serve those of the greatest need——

Mr. POMEROY. You know, you have just been talking. Excuse me, the time is so short. You have just been talking about enrollment failures and I would say a program that has half the people in it that are eligible raises serious questions about the ultimate effectiveness of enrollments. And so now you have got a program that brings in these people that are otherwise getting some kind of TANF benefit, reflecting their low income and you want to kick them off the program and put them through some bureaucratic hoops to get on it. Now, how in the world is this responsive at all to increasing the participation in the Food Stamp Program? In North Dakota, only 51 percent who are eligible receive benefits and we are above the national average.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Pomeroy, as the Under Secretary was saying, individuals who receive TANF cash benefits, receive SSI, they are

disabled, they are still continued to be categorically eligible. What this proposal got it doing was individuals who end up being made eligible for the Food Stamp Program because they are tangentially related to the TANF, and what the attempt was here was to make sure that these very limited resources are going to those people who are the most in need.

Mr. POMEROY. Following up on that, what is the, and I trust that the time is running, so it will kick me out when we are done, so these people that are the tangential edge of eligibility, what are they making?

Ms. COLER. I would say you have to sit back and look at categorical eligibility and how it started. It was to simplify for States and for those States that had more generous TANF benefits that exceeded the food stamp eligibility requirement, generally about 130 percent of poverty, they could automatically be eligible. We want to scale that back to just those that are receiving TANF cash. So if your State——

Mr. POMEROY. Now, what if a State had a slightly different, for example, motor vehicle valuation, now, would that kick them out?

Ms. COLER. That should not. If they are receiving a TANF cash benefit in your State, even if it exceeds the food stamp eligibility, that individual would still be categorically eligible for food stamps. However, if they aren't getting the cash benefit, if it is some other service, they are still able to apply for the Food Stamp Program.

Mr. POMEROY. What are these other TANF services?

Ms. COLER. One that was brought to our attention were receiving child reproductive information from a TANF fund, so they were TANF-funded pamphlets.

Mr. POMEROY. Is that the one? We have got 390,000 individuals. Do you think most of them are brochure recipients?

Ms. COLER. I would say at least half would be, I think, and it is depending on the State.

Mr. POMEROY. The position of the Department of Agriculture is that about half of these categorically eligible individuals that will no longer be eligible, their only TANF benefit is receiving brochures? That is the position of the Administration?

Ms. COLER. Well, I will have to submit a more detailed description. It varies on the States.

Mr. POMEROY. Well, you said that was the position.

Ms. COLER. No, I said that was the——

Mr. POMEROY. Now I will issue a formal request to the Under Secretary. I want breakouts. You have 390,000 people here. The last time this came up was last year. The staff person for the Ag Committee putting this proposal forward had no idea what the ultimate impact would be. I want information. Who are these people? How are they connected? What is their income? And I would like it in writing and I think it would be very important to the consideration of this program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Pomeroy. Mr. Boustany. Charles.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have just kind of a general question, but I want to make a comment first. After getting elected to Congress, I started going around to many of the various agencies in my district, whether it was dealing with housing, work-

force development, nutrition, to try to understand what was happening on the ground and one of the things I was amazed by was just the diverse array of services at local, State and then, you know, of course Federal programs. And after the two hurricanes hit our State, I noticed that we had a problem with coordination of all these efforts and of course, it became a very acute problem and what we did in my hometown of Lafayette was that we put together a group, sort of an advisory council, to kind of coordinate all of these efforts. And I guess the question I have for you, and you mentioned your outreach program and the things you do with the eligibility. Are you looking at opportunities to coordinate various services at the local level?

Mr. CARTER. We always, within the Food Stamp Program, look for opportunities to be able to leverage the Food Stamp Program along with other important human services. I would say, and this is my own editorial comment, is that we do have a real challenge, in that all of the programs that we operate, the local, State and Federal programs, all end up existing in their silos and it does become a real challenge to take a comprehensive look at an individual or a community and bring all of those services together. But we make the Food Stamp Program have some flexibilities built into it, which allow for it to be able to work in conjunction with some other programs, but it is an overall design problem of our safety net, if you would.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I appreciate your answer, because I have spoken to heads of many of the local agencies and encourage them to find a way to coordinate, because I think it can leverage what they are doing much more effectively. And do you think there is a Federal role to direct local agencies to form some sort of anti-poverty councils, for want of a better description?

Mr. CARTER. I think the Federal role really can be in looking to, through waivers that sort, be able to relax some rules to allow for it to happen, because very, very often the rules of one program will conflict with the rules of another so it doesn't allow for that sort of coordination and where we can use waiver authority to be able to relax some rules to allow for that, it would allow for more of that kind of coordination.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you. I appreciate your answer and that is all I have. I yield back.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Mr. Kagen.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you. Madam Under Secretary, you have mentioned in your written testimony that you would be remiss if you didn't mention the other programs that you administer, such as the WIC Program, so maybe I would appreciate you enlightening me as to why you have 185 percent of the Federal poverty level for the WIC Program and 130 percent to qualify for food stamps.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. I am going to go ahead and pass that on to Kate Coler. She has more details.

Ms. COLER. Those eligibility requirements are established by Congress, by statute, and food stamps was determined that, generally, 130 percent of poverty and where the Women, Infant and Children, because it does target a more vulnerable population, Congress determined that at 185 percent.

Mr. KAGEN. My next question has to do with boots on the ground. Do you have enough staff to administer this program? If you have an enrollment that is so woefully poor, I mean, if I was a cardiovascular surgeon and 51 percent of my people were surviving, I would not give you a passing grade. What is the problem in terms of enrolling those who are in need? Is it like Iraq? Do you not have enough boots on the ground?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Congressman, we just had our appropriation hearings last week, last Thursday, and we are requesting $3 million in our budget to increase some of the staff. But some of the staff will probably go, where we would like to see them go is more in the investigative piece for the fraud and the trafficking. And then the other is some quality control and then, obviously, to work and partner and provide technical assistance to the States.

Mr. CARTER. And if I could just add? Our boots on the ground, if you would, is also our State partners, because the States administer the Food Stamp Program on our behalf and so it is joined-at-the-hip partnership and what we attempt to do is to support that partnership by, again, sharing best practices, looking where one State is doing something which is of real value and benefit and attempting to share those with others. So yes, we certainly could use the kinds of additional resources that are outlined in our budget, but we see the States as being invaluable partners in the administration of the program.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Mr. Goodlatte.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Secretary, welcome. Welcome to all of you. We appreciate your testimony here today. I would like to start with a very general question. How do you determine if a household is food insecure?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. That is a good question. Do you want to go ahead? We will let Kate answer that.

Ms. COLER. Well, our job really is to enroll people and to make sure that they have access to the Food Stamp Program under the eligibility criteria that Congress established that each State then implement. As far as the measure of food insecurity, that is a study that the USDA does through the Economic Research Service and they do household——

Mr. GOODLATTE. But certainly there must be a definition of food insecurity that is the basis of the survey.

Ms. COLER. The survey asks a variety of questions and then they extrapolate the data from that. Our concern is no matter——

Mr. GOODLATTE. But when you say a certain percentage of the population are food insecure, you must be using a certain portion of that data to arrive at the percentage of the population that you arrive that meet that criteria.

Ms. COLER. Certainly the researchers do explain how they come to their conclusions and that the food insecurity overall, nationally, we have seen a slight dip. What we focus on is reaching those that are eligible according to the income guidelines.

Mr. GOODLATTE. In other words, you are saying by whatever definition you are pursuing, the number of people who are deemed to be food insecure has dipped a little bit?

Ms. COLER. We have seen it. In this last report that the Department issued, there was a very slight decline.

Mr. GOODLATTE. I wonder if you might provide to the chairman and to the members of the committee what that definition of food insecurity is so that we can understand the basis for the figures. And I take it that it is not, that percentage does not indicate the percentage of people in the country who are hungry, who have hunger.

Ms. COLER. No, I actually have the report here and I am happy to submit that. That does have the definition and they are very careful in how they are defining food security or insecurity and to the different degrees.

Mr. GOODLATTE. And it relates to whether or not somebody knows they can stretch their budget based upon their income and other sources of support through a period of time, rather than that people in the family are actually going hungry?

Ms. COLER. This study does look at economic questions more than physical condition questions. But again, from our agency's perspective, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, we are looking to make sure that people who are eligible for our program have access to it, because this is really a very strong tool to combat hunger or food insecurity. It is very important for low-income families to know about this program and to utilize it should they be eligible.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Well, let me ask you about those eligibility requirements. I believe Mr. Weill, in his written testimony, states that we need to expand the eligibility to certain able-bodied adults who do not meet the work requirements. Would you explain the ability that the State agencies already have to make exceptions on a case-by-case basis?

Mr. CARTER. An able-bodied individual is able to receive, that is, an able-bodied individual without dependents, (ABAWDS), is able to receive three months worth of food stamps in a three year period. The State has a 15-percent exemption that they are able to enact each year, that they could increase that, the number of or percentage of ABAWDS, if you would.

Mr. GOODLATTE. And I understand that that is 15 percent of the State's entire food stamp caseload can be able-bodied adults without dependents.

Mr. CARTER. That is correct.

Mr. GOODLATTE. So even without the three month benefit, which goes to every able-bodied adult without dependents, the State has a lot of room to meet the needs of a lot of people, in spite of the fact that the Congress was obviously, when we changed our rules, very concerned that people who are able-bodied be required to work in order to receive food stamps. Notwithstanding that, they can provide people with, in that circumstance, a lot of food stamps, because they can comprise up 15 percent of the entire pool of people in that State receiving food stamps. Am I correct?

Mr. CARTER. Yes, the States do have some flexibility in that regard.

Ms. COLER. They are based on geography. It has to do with the economic conditions within certain pockets of the State, but the State can ask for a waiver based on the geographic situation, more so than the individual circumstances.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Let me follow up on Mr. Pomeroy's question as well. He noted that current law allows certain individuals, not otherwise eligible for food stamp benefits, to receive them through categorical eligibility. I think that is what he was referring to when he said certain people receiving just a pamphlet. For example, certain States allow a person who is eligible to receive TANF in-kind services, that might be the pamphlet, such as job training, to receive food stamp benefits. But some households receiving food stamp benefits despite the fact that the household does not meet the conventional food stamp eligibility requirements, would it be more cost-effective to limit categorical eligibility to people who receive cash benefits from TANF and concentrate the available food stamp funds in the segments of the population who demonstrate that they need them the most?

Ms. COLER. That is exactly what is in our proposal, to limit it to just the cash benefits. So if the State has a more generous TANF cash benefit above the 130 percent of the food stamp eligibility, that individual would be categorically eligible for food stamps. It is just those that are receiving services only that we are trying to——

Mr. GOODLATTE. And we are not talking about people under the WIC Program who can be in a much higher eligibility criteria because the percentage of poverty is much——

Ms. COLER. WIC and food stamps do not have an automatic eligibility.

Mr. GOODLATTE. People who have a higher income level are able to qualify for WIC. We are only talking about the women with infants and children are in a different category than this and here, when we are talking about a person who might only receive a pamphlet, the reason may well be that we have an interest in their nutritional needs, but they are well above the income level set by the Congress and that particular State has chosen, notwithstanding that, to give them food stamp benefits even though they do not have that eligibility. That, I think, is a right of any State to choose to do so. But should they do so in circumstances where the Federal government, where this Congress, with our tight budgets, are paying for that? I think not and I agree with the position of the Administration. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, and for those who are witnessing today. A little bit earlier in the comments, we had someone that talked about constitutional rights and freedom and liberty and freedom of speech. In that First Amendment that was added, there are actually 12 that was authorized in 1787, one of them said freedom of speech and then right under it, it said freedom of religion. It pretty much speaks for one of the most important things we have, when you talk about the Constitution, is to be able to vote. Until 1920, ma'am, a lot folks in this room couldn't have voted. So when we talk about what the constitutional responsibilities of all of us are, we need to maybe look at our Constitution, that some folks on this committee would assume that everything is constitutional.

But freedom of religion, it says someplace in that book that I read, I was hungry and you feed me, and the nations that do that, I will bless them. I think we have been blessed in this Nation for

a reason. Many of us have agreed from our hearts and through our faith, that it is important that those who are poor and those who are described in that book that I read, that when you reach out to those, it is one of the most blessed things you can do. And I think the Food Stamp Program has been a major part of why this Nation has been blessed the way that it has. There is nothing constitutional that requires it. It is in that First Amendment that says freedom of religion that gives us the responsibility to be sure that we act as a Nation. No other nation in the world has done what we have done. No other nation of the world has a safety net nor provides, for those who live in this country as we have provided, no other nation of the world achieves that.

Four questions. The percent of working families on food stamps; how many military families are on food stamps; the percent of eligibility today that are able to obtain food assistance; and the purchasing power of the Food Stamp Program, has it increased or decreased? And the reason I ask those four, and if I need to repeat those, I will do that, I have no doubt that the farm program that we have is the best bargain that the American consumer has in any area of Federal spending. It has kept food safe, it has kept food abundant and it has kept food available to many families, those who can purchase and those who are able to purchase with food stamp assistance. Do you want them one at a time? The percent of working families today on food stamps.

Ms. COLER. A significant change from what we have seen since the 1996 welfare reform. We will have to get you information on the exact numbers. We have got a food stamp population of about 26 million. The working poor is really a population we are trying to target. Percentage-wise, we are only reaching about 30 percent of those working poor that are eligible for the program.

Mr. DAVIS. So about 70 percent are not being reached?

Ms. COLER. Of the working families that are eligible for the program.

Mr. DAVIS. Military.

Ms. COLER. They have been underserved.

Mr. DAVIS. How many military families do we have?

Ms. COLER. We would have to get that information to submit.

Mr. DAVIS. Would you get that for me?

Ms. COLER. And we will.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. And the purchasing power, has that receded in comparison to where it was five years ago, 10 years ago, or when the program really started?

Mr. CARTER. I am not quite sure, Congressman, if I understand the question. If I am——

Ms. COLER. If I could just throw in. The purchasing power, I mean, it is that we see the percentage of the household for food is relatively consistent and I think, actually lower than it has been in years for the Nation as a whole. One of the figures we do know specifically about the Food Stamp Program is, not only the purchasing power and the economic benefit to the household that is participating, but every $5 in food stamp benefits yields about $9.2 in local economic activity. And one of the approaches we have been taking in trying to improve participation in this program——

Mr. DAVIS. What I am talking about, purchasing power, an example. In 1961, that was a day that I could buy a gallon of gas for 25 cents, that was four gallons for a dollar. In comparison, what does a dollar buy today?

Ms. COLER. Overall, for the Nation as a whole, you can buy more food for your dollar than you could before, I think, and we will submit that USDA does some research on just overall, and I know that the Farm Bureau celebrates the day that all of your income goes for food, I think, in early April or in late March and it seems to get a little earlier each year.

Mr. DAVIS. Thanks. I appreciate it.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Davis. Before we dismiss this panel, I have one final question and hopefully, you know, you can be brief in answering this. All children who participate in the Food Stamp Program are automatically eligible for free school meals. There is a new requirement on the States and schools to auto-enroll these children to avoid duplicative paperwork for parents to save schools from spending unnecessary time for processing applications for these children. But according to your figures, only 60 percent of the children on food stamps are auto-enrolled in these free school meals. Why aren't we doing a better job in connecting the hungry children to school meals, and what steps has the United States is taking to get the number up to 100 percent? Especially as we look at the No Child Left Behind, it impacts a lot of the learning and behavior patterns and the testing that goes on, because a lot of these children that are going to school are going hungry and yet a lot of the requirements in the testing, and it is very difficult to pass the tests when you are going to school on an empty stomach. And yet teachers are asked that these students have got to perform at a certain level and yet we haven't done enough to make sure that the children are receiving the nutritional programs that they need.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. That is a very good question, Mr. Chairman, and I am going to go ahead and pass that on to Kate, because, again, she has worked very intensively about this and this is an important issue for FNS, the good, healthy, nutritious meals in the school systems, because, again, I have seen on my visits out to the school, it is very important for kids to get a good start. But again, I have seen a lot of schools where the Breakfast Program is growing and they are very much in support of that, with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and again, trying to incorporate their lunch that kids can actually eat so that they will be able to learn and grow healthy.

Mr. BACA. Yes, but it is more than just a lunch. Remember that lunch, they are taking the tests already and lunch is after and they are taking the tests in between. So what happens to that child when their stomach is growling?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. The schools that I have visited, Mr. Chairman, the Fresh Fruit and Snack Program is in the afternoon. It is between lunch and recess and the end of school for that, I am sure, because that is a time when they are hungry. But I will go ahead and let Kate maybe give you some more details.

Mr. BACA. All right. Thank you.

Ms. COLER. Just your question about making sure that the children are participating in both is so important and it is an easy population to try to target and really help enroll in the program. The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act passed in 2004 did mandate direct certification for children from the Food Stamp Program into the National School Lunch Program and it requires information sharing between the State agencies that administer both, and so we have seen a lot of progress in making sure that children who participate in the Food Stamp Program are receiving a free meal at lunch. I think we are also looking at innovative ways to do more to have data information coming from the schools to help do some outreach to families that may be eligible for the Food Stamp Program. So that is just one area that the collaboration has yielded some great results.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. I know that we are just about done with our panel, but we will ask Mr. Moran for a comment.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you for doing that. I apologize for being absent. I think every Kansan, and maybe you all can say that about your own districts, but every Kansan is in Washington, D.C. today. Madam Secretary, you and I had a brief conversation before the hearing commenced and I just would like to express my appreciation to you for your willingness to meet with me. We had a conversation on the phone several months ago, but we continue to have WIC issue in Kansas in which we are losing, potentially losing our WIC stores because of a proposed final rule at USDA that bases the price paid upon a formula that includes large providers that the small stores can't compete with. And so I just want to express my desire to work with you to see if, one more time, maybe we can find a solution. And despite your certainty that USDA can't solve this problem, I am going to convince you that you can.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Yes, I will be looking forward to our meeting.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. BACA. Charles, a quick comment?

Mr. BOUSTANY. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to ask one last question. The question is about the administrative cost of the program and I know it is a very complex question beyond the scope of this hearing. But I would ask that you provide the subcommittee with your assessment of the administrative cost of this program and any suggestions that you may have that we can take that would make the program more efficient. Thank you.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. I would be happy to do that.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Goodlatte, a final?

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just have one question. As I indicated in my opening statement, I am a very strong supporter of the Emergency Food Assistance Program and the vital help it provides to food banks, because much of the food they receive is very generous donations from individuals, from grocery stores, from food processing companies, but that is basically at the choice of the people who donate the food, whereas the Commodity Program helps the food back round out what they provide

to a family and make sure that it is a balanced diet, a balanced selection of food products. So lots of the vegetables and fruits and meats and so on come out of that program, and I wonder if you could give us your assessment of how well you think the Emergency Food Assistance Program is working?

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. Well, I can give you my piece and if Kate and Clarence wants to join in at any time, that would be fine. But I do think that the food bank, they do a great job and I know that we continue to build our partnership with them. And in fact, I was in Chicago, Illinois, Zion, where there is a Food Stamp Express pilot project and it was fantastic. It was in a church food bank and they had this pilot set up where there was two volunteers actually doing prescreening eligibility for participants there for food stamps. When they left there they had a link card, so within 72 hours they can actually call the local State office and they could have one to two months of food stamps for food. So then they can go back to their local office and then apply, you know, the way they normally would. But at least it got them through the next couple of months. They knew that they were eligible and it is a great pilot project. So I am looking forward for the evaluation, but our food banks, we have a very good relationship with them. They are very strong and they do play a vital role.

Mr. CARTER. The other thing I would say, Congressman, is I think that it is important component of an overall feeding apparatus, if you would, and so you couldn't just have a Food Stamp Program by itself. There does need to be a complement to it. You know, we saw, when we had the weather-related disasters, how that congregate feeding was actually the first thing we could do. Quite frankly, in some places the Food Stamp Program couldn't work, at least in places in Louisiana, because there was no infrastructure to be able to purchase the food. So it is a component of an overall nutrition apparatus.

Mr. GOODLATTE. That is a very good point. It is a very good point. I had the opportunity to bring this committee to New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana to Congressman Boustany's district, as a matter of fact, following Hurricane Katrina and we visited the Second Harvest food bank in New Orleans, which distributes to many of the parishes in the surrounding area and they had, in the month immediately after the hurricane, increased their distribution of food about sevenfold over their normal distribution and that came also from help from other food banks around the country who sent food that sometimes they didn't really have to spare. So making sure that this TEFAP program, which then is needed to replenish not only New Orleans, but other food banks that sent food to them from around the country, making sure it stays strong I think is a high priority.

Ms. MONTANEZ-JOHNER. We do have in our Farm Bill proposal to add $2.75 billion in the fruits and vegetables, so that would be going to the food banks.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Goodlatte. I would like to thank the panelists for being here, but before I do, I would like to have Mr. Moran make one final comment.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my understanding that Deputy Under Secretary Kate Coler's tenure at the Department of Agriculture is coming to an end and I just want to take this moment that I assume may be your last opportunity to appear before our committee and thank you for your service to the public and your commitment to seeing that people don't go hungry in the United States and around the world.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. With that, I would like to thank the panelists and like to invite the second panelists, Dr. James Weill, President of Food Research and Action Center; and Mariana Chilton, Ph.D., Principal Investigator from Philadelphia GROW Project from St. Christopher's Hospital for Children; Janet Murguia, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza; and Rene Massey, Director of Baldwin County Department of Human Resource; and Gary Brunk, Executive Director from Kansas Action for Children; and Kim McCoy Wade, Executive Director from the California Association of Food Banks, from Sacramento. I would just like to mention that the television cameras from Univision will be taping during the subcommittee second panel today. We will begin with the first panelist. Mr. Weill, would you please begin when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF JAMES D. WEILL, PRESIDENT, FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER

Mr. WEILL. Good morning, Chairman Baca and members of the subcommittee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Food Research and Action Center has been working since 1970 to end hunger in this country, and the Food Stamp Program is the Nation's most important public program working towards that end. A little while back the TV show 60 Minutes interviewed a mother on a line of 896 people waiting outside a food bank in rural Ohio. She told the reporter that when she bought milk for her baby, she would cut it with an equal part of water to make the milk last longer. When asked what her dream in life was, this mother said that it was to feed her baby milk which is undiluted. A better Food Stamp Program can help fulfill her dream, and this Nation not only can afford to fulfill that dream, it can't afford not to. The price to children's health, learning and eventual productivity is too high if we fail to do that.

Food stamps, of course, reach not just children but their parents, their grandparents and other seniors and working an unemployed adults. Eighty-three percent of beneficiaries are children, their families, seniors and disabled persons. There are also more than 600,000 veterans in households receiving food stamps. Food stamps support people, not only in hard economic times, but in emergencies of all types. And several people have mentioned today the important response of the Food Stamp Program after Katrina and the other hurricanes of 2005. And the program is extraordinarily important, not just to hungry children in cities, but in suburbs and rural areas as well. A University of New Hampshire study showed that non-metropolitan areas contained 22 percent of the U.S. population, but 31 percent of food stamp beneficiaries.

Let me turn now to the program's specific impact on children's nutrition and health. First, food stamps increase household food

spending and therefore increase basic nutrients in the home's food supply. As the Under Secretary mentioned, USDA has found that food stamps raise scores on the Healthy Eating Index, a measure which is based on the dietary guidelines. The higher the level of food stamps the family receives, the larger the positive effect on the index. Food stamps also have been shown to have a positive effect on preschool children's intake of iron, Vitamin A and other nutrients, and an improvement reading and math for children from kindergarten to third grade.

Separate from the boost in nutrients, the basic building blocks that food stamps provide, children also benefit when food stamps help make their households food secure, the phrase the USDA and the Census Bureau used for households with adequate resources to obtain a healthy diet on a regular basis. When children live in households that are food insecure, they are more likely to become sick or hospitalized, to be irritable in the classroom and to be absent from school. Food stamps help cure food insecurity. Food stamps also can prevent childhood obesity, which, as the chairman and several members of the subcommittee have indicated this morning, is a growing concern. One of the studies, for example, shows that school-aged food insecure girls are less likely to be overweight if they participate in the Food Stamp Program. Food stamps can play a protective role against obesity for children, but that role may well be diminished by the inadequacy of the benefit amount, and that inadequacy brings me to the final subject I want to mention briefly.

As important and effective as the Food Stamp Program is, it needs to be improved in significant ways to further reduce childhood hunger and food insecurity, to combat obesity and to support nutrition, health and education. The first priority is making benefit allotments more adequate. It is now the norm rather than the exception for families to run out of food stamp help days, often 10 days, before the end of the month. The average benefit, which is roughly a dollar per person per meal, just is not enough to purchase a healthy diet. And the minimum benefit of $10, which has been unchanged since 1977, when it had three times as much purchasing power, has to be adjusted. More adequate benefits backed by better nutrition education, as the Under Secretary discussed, will combat obesity as well as hunger.

Second, reforms are needed so the program can reach additional needy people. It is essential and long over due to revise resource limits that have been stuck for most households at a maximum of $2,000 for more than three decades. We also urge you to cover key groups of needy people totally barred by arbitrary program rules, particularly legal immigrant parents and other adults, and unemployed able-bodied adults who face a three month and three year time limit on benefits.

Third, we hope that the subcommittee will work to improve access to the program by already eligible but unserved families, the 40 percent that have been mentioned who are eligible now but not getting benefits, through streamlining, eliminating unnecessary red tape and supporting out reach efforts. In some ways, this will help relieve the shortage of boots on the ground that Representative Kagen referenced.

I want to close with a metaphor that I am borrowing from the doctors of the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, or C–SNAP. So I may be stealing from Dr. Chilton's presentation and if so, I apologize. But it is worth saying twice, in any event. They say that food stamps are like a childhood vaccine against malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity, a miracle drug that reduces infant mortality and child hospitalization and increases school achievement. But because benefits are so inadequate, we are giving children what they call a sub-therapeutic dose of this miracle drug, enough to make them somewhat better, and that is incredibly important and we appreciate Congress' role in doing that, but less than the children need to cure the disease, and we are giving this miracle drug to fewer than 60 percent of the people who need it. So we urge you to work to reach more children and adults with fuller doses of this miracle drug as you reauthorize the program. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weill appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Weill. Dr. Chilton.

STATEMENT OF MARIANA CHILTON, PH.D., MPH, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, THE PHILADELPHIA GROW PROJECT AT ST. CHRISTOPHER'S HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN

Ms. CHILTON. Muy buenos días, Chairman Baca and distinguished committee members. It is an honor to be invited to speak to you today about the importance of child nutrition and child health as you begin your hard work of reviewing the Food Stamp Program. I am a public health researcher from Pennsylvania, where agriculture is the Number One industry. It is where we take pride in our farms, our dairies and food production and at the same time, where we always remember our youngest children at risk for hunger. I am here today to speak on behalf of more than 23,000 infants and toddlers and their families across the United States who show up to emergency rooms and ambulatory care clinics with health crises whose roots stretch far beyond the clinic walls.

I can speak about these babies because I am one of several pediatric and public health researchers from the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, the study we call C–SNAP. C–SNAP is a multi-site research study that, since 1998, has been the most current and largest dataset in the Nation, about the food security, health and development of very young children living in poverty. We have held in our hands each one of these 23,000 children in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Arkansas, Massachusetts, California and Washington, D.C. We have measured their height, taken their weight and interviewed their parents and grandmothers about their participation in food stamps, WIC, subsidized housing and child care programs. We ask each of these children's parents about all of the policies that begin right here on the Hill. In this way, our C–SNAP study shows evidence of how Federal policies manifest in the bodies and brains of babies.

I want to tell you Alexander's story. His mother brought him into the emergency room at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia last week. He is a 6-month-old baby who came in with pneumonia. When we interviewed his mother, Marilyn, she told us

that they did not have enough money to buy food. She said that they told her that her husband makes too much money. His wage of $14 an hour puts their family of four just over the limit for their household size to receive food stamps. She also described how she could not pay her heating bill, so her house was cold. In the meantime, she says, due to Alexander's pneumonia, baby Alexander has lost weight and they do not have enough money for food to make it to the end of March. My physician colleagues would not be surprised that a hungry baby would catch pneumonia, because good immune function depends on good nutrition. Furthermore, good nutrition is the brain's building blocks. Alexander's food insecurity, weight loss and illness place him at risk for long-term developmental problems.

If we look at the USDA food security report that is released every year, it has been consistently reported that the surest way for a family to be at risk for food insecurity is to have a very young child under the age of six. On C–SNAP, we monitor the most vulnerable group of these young children, those who are in the rapid growth phase from birth to three years old. The C–SNAP study has found that food insecurity is related to higher developmental risk. Nutrition provides the building blocks to build new brain. Everything from cognitive development, fine and gross motor skills, to educational obtainment and psychosocial disorders are linked to a child's nutritional status. The brain's building blocks for all of these skills are laid down in those first three years of life. If a child does not have the proper nutrition during this critical period, long before they cross the threshold of a school, their ability to pay attention and learn may be permanently altered, starting the child on a downward spiral for life.

The C–SNAP study has also found that children in food insecure households are 90 percent more likely to be in poor health and 30 percent more likely to have a history of being hospitalized. The average cost of a hospitalization for a pediatric illness costs about $11,000. This same amount of money could provide enough food stamps for a family of four for several years. As you can see, these negative health impacts on a child's development translate into dollars subsequently spent by the public sector to address issues that could have been prevented, expenditures that could have been avoided, if we practiced the prevention that we know works, by assuring adequate food and nutrition.

There is some good, powerful medicine for this problem, but doctors, pediatricians, teachers and nutritionists cannot prescribe this medicine; however, you can. You can prescribe this good medicine through protecting and enhancing the Food Stamp Program. Our research shows that children whose family receives food stamps were 26 percent less likely to be food insecure. Our research has also shown that food stamps buffer young children from health problems in food insecure households. Other researchers have found that if a child, starting at birth, is enrolled in the Food Stamp Program, then the Medicaid payments for this child's anemia and malnutrition are likely to decrease as compared to children who did not receive food stamps from birth. Food stamps is a good medicine, but the dose is not enough. When America's families get food stamps, the dose is what my pediatrician colleagues

would call sub-therapeutic, but it has already stated before me, so I will continue on.

You might remember that the Thrifty Food Plan is the USDA's theoretical estimate of what it would cost to purchase a grocery basket that provides a minimally adequate diet. This serves as the basis on which food stamp allotments are calculated. The government's lowest cost meal plan, the Thrifty Food Plan, does not reflect current scientific thinking about nutrition and health. If a family of four, like Marilyn's, tried to purchase the most economically reasonable version of the Surgeon General's most recent dietary recommendations, their cost would exceed the maximum possible food stamp allotment by nearly $2,000 a year. This is an impossible expense for families who are constantly trading off how to have money to get to work, pay for child care, keep a roof over their heads, or keep the house warm while trying to provide healthy meals. Therefore, on the basis of our medical research and that of others, my colleagues and I make the following recommendations: food stamp benefits should be based on a food plan that reflects what it actually costs to buy a health diet for all members of the family.

To continue, our C–SNAP sites in Los Angeles, California and Minneapolis, Minnesota, pick up many immigrants, including many young Latino children. Latino children who are in food insecure homes are two times more likely to be at developmental risk than Latino children in food secure households. Our data showed that Latinos have very high rates of food insecurity, especially our newest American citizens born to immigrant parents. But food stamps protect these children, as citizen children of immigrant parents are 32 percent less likely to be in poor health if their parents receive food stamps. They make a profound difference. This is extremely problematic, however, that new Americans are not given or don't have the access to food stamps and are food insecure because they are the fastest growing child population in America, which brings us to our final recommendation, restore food stamp eligibility to all income eligible legal immigrants and increase outreach to these populations.

When you consider the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, this is your opportunity to make history by ensuring a strong nutrition title that will make children's bodies strong, their health excellent, their minds ready to learn and all of them ready to achieve to their fullest potential. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Chilton appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. The red light indicates that it is almost time due and if you can, stick within that period of time. I know the subject matter is so important and that is why I let you go on. At this point, may I have Mrs. Murguia? Janet?

STATEMENT OF JANET MURGUIA, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

Ms. MURGUIA. Thank you. Thank you. Hello, my name is Janet Murguia and I am President and CEO of the National Council of La Raza. NCLR is a private nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1968 to reduce poverty and discrimination and im-

prove opportunities for the Nation's Hispanics. As the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, NCLR serves all Hispanic nationality groups, in all regions of the country, through a network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations. I want to thank the Subcommittee on Nutrition for inviting me to speak about the impact of the Food Stamp Program on Latino families and children. I also extend particular thanks to our chair here today, Chair Baca, for his efforts to ensure that Latino families can fully participate in the Food Stamp Program. In 2002, your work on the Farm Bill ensured that many more legal immigrants, especially children, could access this important program and I thank you for your leadership. I also want to commend the two Kansas representatives. As a home State Kansas girl, I appreciate your interest in being here today.

You know, at NCLR, I take great pride in the fact that we had a very excellent report that was put out late last year, earlier this year, in an area around food insecurity and Latinos. It is called Sin Provecho and I commend it to the committee and I am going to highlight some of the points from this, I think, groundbreaking report. There are more than 42 million Latinos in the United States contributing to almost every facet of American life, as you all know, bolstering the workforce, serving in the military and helping to strengthen the Nation's economy. However, food security is hard to achieve. More than one in five Latinos live at or below the poverty line, and nearly ¼ of Latino households with children are poor. Why is improving Latino food security so important? Children who are food secure have higher school performance and are likely to be in better health. You have heard from our panelists and I am sure you will hear more about that.

But a study of young Latino children found that their parents were twice as likely to note developmental concerns if they were food insecure. Currently, 17.9 percent of Latinos are food insecure, which is more than twice the rate for non-Hispanic white households; about 8.2 percent. Latino households with children have even higher rates of food insecurity; 21.6 percent of Latino households with children experience food insecurity, compared to 11.8 percent of white households with children. The Food Stamp Program shows great potential for helping Latinos achieve food security with improved nutrition. After the implementation of partial immigrant restorations to food stamps in 2002, there was a surge in Latino food security by four percent, even as the numbers of poor in the Latino community were growing. With increased food security, the negative consequences of food insecurity are diminished, which can range from intense headaches to long-lasting cognitive deficits to growth abnormalities and decreased ability to fight illness and disease. Latino families and children do not have equal opportunity to take advantage of the Food Stamp Program.

Only 52 percent of Latinos are participating. Why? There are major legal restrictions placed on legal immigrant families. Despite the 2002 food stamp restorations, there are still a number of complex laws that restrict between 250,000 and 300,000 lawfully residing immigrants from the rolls of food stamps. As a result, participation is abysmally low, with only four in 10 eligible non-citizens participating. These barriers also affect children in these households,

many of whom are citizens. Only half of eligible citizen children in households headed by non-citizen parents are participating in the Food Stamp Program, compared to eight in ten eligible citizen children in citizen-headed households.

Latinos have difficulties navigating the food stamp system. Administrative barriers and lack of available translated materials make it difficult for families to apply for food stamps. Further, in households with non-citizens, complex eligibility rules and fear of immigration reporting all compound this confusion. Improving the Food Stamp Program for Latinos is essential. We have a great opportunity to improve food security in America by building a stronger Food Stamp Program. As the nutrition title of the Farm Bill is considered, it is essential to do the following to improve the food security for Latino families and children: it should be a top priority to restore benefits to all legal immigrants and we want to reinforce that of the other panelists, as they have said before, and we must ensure that Latino community is engaged in outreach and enrollment activities. The Farm Bill should include provisions which allow culturally and linguistic appropriate outreach and enrollment services to be carried out by community-based organizations. We heard earlier today, the USDA was talking about involving the States more. Well, they need to do even more than that. They need to drill down and involve the actual communities who serve these Latino families. At NCLR, we have a network of 300 community-based organizations and there are several other national organizations that could invoke their ties to those communities to make sure that we have that culturally and linguistic and appropriate services to those families.

I just want to thank you for this opportunity to testify and commend you for your leadership in looking at this very important issue. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Murguia appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much for your testimony. We next have Ms. Massey.

STATEMENT OF RENE MASSEY, DIRECTOR, BALDWIN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. MASSEY. Thank you, Mr. Baca. Mother Theresa, in her essential wisdom, wrote, I once picked up a small girl who was wandering the streets lost. Hunger was written all over her face. Who knows how long it had been she had eaten anything. I offered her a piece of bread. The little one started eating, crumb by crumb, and I told her, eat, eat the bread. Aren't you hungry? She looked at me and said, I am just afraid that when I run out of bread, I will still be hungry. We know Mother Theresa touched the lives of millions of children in India, here in the United States, and all around the world. Her story about the hungry little girl could be about a child in Calcutta, but sadly enough, it also could easily be about a child in Alabama. More specifically, a child in southwest Alabama, where I work and oversee the administration of the States Food Stamp Program to the citizens of Baldwin County.

Baldwin County is the largest county geographically in Alabama, and is the second fastest growing in population. Our county is lo-

cated on the Gulf of Mexico and is the largest county for tourist industry and potential jobs in this industry in the State. Many families and children benefit from the States Food Stamp Program in Baldwin County. However, about six months ago, in studying the growth of our population and from feedback from our State officials, we realized there was an unserved number of citizens who we were failing to reach with the benefits of the program. We began an outreach to better serve our citizens by working with our agency partners, the schools and our local staff and other programs, et cetera, to be sure applications were made available in various agencies and that people were assisted in completing the applications. In just a few short months, we were able to increase the county's participation by an extra 10 percent. We have continued to work toward our goals of reducing hunger and providing better nutrition for children and their families by these means and other ideas we continue to explore. There is much that needs to be done to further simplify the program in order to encourage more families with children to access the benefits.

From my 28 years of social work in Alabama, I can come before you today and testify that the Food Stamp Program has been a godsend to many hungry children in our State. It is the largest benefit program in the Department of Human Resources. The program is designed to supplement the basic food needs of low-income households and our working poor. It also increases the family's food buying power and improves nutrition and health of many adults and children. We are all aware of the emphasis that is placed on healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. It is very important that our low-income families have access to programs that supplement their ability to make wise choices for their family and put food on their table. Currently our State has nearly 514,000 people receiving benefits, and of this number, over 278,000 are children, making them the largest population receiving food stamps in Alabama.

It is said repeatedly that our children all across our Nation are our greatest resource. We have worked very hard in Alabama to make the needs of children a priority, as evidenced by the many improvements in our child welfare programs over the past two decades. We realize the value of the Food Stamp Program as it helps to contribute to family stability. The ability of a family to feed their children and provide proper nutrition to them, keeps many families off the child welfare and neglect rolls, thereby strengthening our families in Alabama.

The 2002 Farm Bill brought about significant positive changes that improved and simplified the delivery of the Food Stamp Program to our citizens. However, there continue to be areas that need further strengthening. Federal funding for the Food Stamp Program must keep pace with the daily-increasing needs and the ever-increasing costs of providing a healthful diet for our families and our children. Also, funding for companion programs for education and nutrition should be increased. Including nutrition education as a viable program thrust has aided our families in Alabama tremendously by educating them on how to select healthy foods for themselves and their children. We applaud programs such as Teen Nutrition, Program Nutrition Education, Eat Smart, Play Hard,

School Breakfast Program, and many others, as they support the goal of providing better nutrition for our children.

Many of you will recall the hurricane of 1979, Hurricane Frederick. I began my career seven weeks after Frederick hit the Alabama Gulf Coast. While I was assigned to the child welfare program, I will never forget observing the greatest need of our citizens in rural southwest Alabama at that time: the need for food. Sure, there were sheltering issues, job issues, financial issues, but the first and greatest need was the need for food. Almost 30 years later, that basic need has not changed for our families and their children.

Chairman Baca, Congressman Bonner, and members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the Food Stamp Program and its impact on our children in Alabama.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Massey appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. To introduce our next witness is the gentlewoman from Kansas.

Ms. BOYDA. I am so pleased to have our executive director of the Kansas Action for Children Network. I always put that network word in there. They are a great advocacy group that comes together really to discuss polices in the State of Kansas that affect so many of our children and this is clearly one that is a big issue. So Mr. Brunk, I certainly appreciate your remarks. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF GARY BRUNK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KANSAS ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Mr. BRUNK. Thank you, Representative Boyda. Thank you, Chairman Baca. I especially appreciate the fact that both of the Members from Kansas are on this committee. Representative Moran and Representative Boyda are here. Representative Moran earlier referred to this grand Kansas tradition of Wheat State political leaders who have fought hunger by strengthening the Food Stamp Program. Both of you are part of this tradition and I look to both of you to continue that tradition. Senator Dole, of course, one of the architects of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, which we are celebrating the 30th anniversary this year, Representative Sebelius, Representative Glickman, Representative Roberts and now Senator Roberts, all played a key role and I was pleased to notice that Representative Roberts is with us in that picture back there, sort of silently guarding over this session.

Let me dispense with some of my written comments, because I don't want to repeat things that others more knowledgeable than I have already said about the relationship between nutrition and child well-being. But let me just a point about the relationship in Kansas between economic security and hunger. I don't want to bore you with too many figures, but child poverty in Kansas increased from a little bit under 12 percent in 2000 to a little bit over 14½ percent in 2004. Twenty percent additional children in Kansas belong to families whose income is below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level, arguably, families that struggle economically. Of those children in Kansas, the percentage of them who live in fami-

lies where one of the parents, one or more parents are not working more than 25 weeks per year grew from 8½ percent in 2002 to a little bit over 10 percent in 2006, the year that we have the most latest figures available. This, I think, adds to the picture of economic income stagnation for many, many families in Kansas who, in the face of that income stagnation, still struggle with rising housing costs, rising healthcare costs, rising child care costs.

It is no surprise, then, that food stamp participation in Kansas over that same period of years increased substantially, from 116,000 families in 2000 to 183,000 families in 2006, an increase of 57 percent. When I talk to my friends, that is the data. On the anecdotal side, when I talk to my friends at the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Wichita, they tell me that, in 2001, they served 6500 clients. In 2005, they served 10,500 clients, a substantial increase. And these are families that are coming once a month to get a supply of food that maybe will give them food for two or three days. One-half of the recipients of food stamps in Kansas are kids and you have already heard that hungry kids are less healthy, more likely to be hospitalized, less prepared to succeed in school, more likely to have behavioral and emotional problems, less likely to be successful adults.

So I come to you with a sense of urgency about the importance of the Food Stamp Program for the health and wellbeing of children and I am going to ask you to strengthen the nutrition title of the Farm Bill in four ways that I think could really make a difference. First, I encourage you to improve food stamp benefit levels which, in Kansas, amounts to 95 cents per person per meal. I don't know how many people think that for 95 cents, a child can be well fed. Not only is the level insufficient, and this is a point that I really want to stress, but as a result of cuts enacted in 1996, the purchasing power of most households food stamp benefits is eroding in value each year. In 2008, food stamp benefits for a typical working parent with two children will be about $37 a month lower than they would have been without the 1996 across-the-board benefit cuts. To restore those benefits at that level would require a standard deduction change from the current $134 a month to $188 a month and then to annually adjust those for inflation. And then families would be able to keep up with the same level of benefits that they enjoyed before 1996.

Secondly, only about two out of every three of those who are eligible for food stamps in Kansas are getting them. I hope your committee will look at streamlining enrollment and eligibility so State agencies can serve more eligible households. Third, I endorse the President's proposal to allow working families with high child care costs to deduct the full cost of that care when determining the food stamp benefit level. That would help literally tens of thousands of families in Kansas. And finally, I urge you to expand access to legal immigrants in poor households that have modest savings. Serving those children and their families is really critical to a comprehensive solution to child poverty in Kansas. Stopping the erosion of benefits, simplifying enrollment, making adjustments for child care costs, and expanding access would move us closer to the goal of eliminating hunger in America.

That tradition in Kansas of working to stop hunger through the Food Stamp Program is a bipartisan tradition. Senator Dole reached out to Senator McGovern to really forge the Food Stamp Act of 1977. So my challenge to my representatives from Kansas is to continue that food stamp tradition of bipartisan work and it is also my challenge to the whole committee. Thank you for attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brunk appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Brunk. Ms. Wade.

STATEMENT OF KIM McCOY WADE, J.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF FOOD BANKS

Ms. WADE. Good morning, or at least in California it is still good morning. I am Kim McCoy Wade with the California Association of Food Banks. I represent 40 food banks across the State, serving about two million people; 5,000 charities and congregations we partner with. I too want to start with a story. Forty years ago my mom, who is actually here with us today, was a Texas home economics graduate and went out to become a VISTA volunteer in Newark, New Jersey, to help other moms learn how to stretch their food stamps. She soon found that living on food stamps, as a VISTA volunteer, it was the moms who taught her how to take that peanut butter and stretch it all month long for soup for your kids. And here we are 40 years later, whether you are in Newark, New Jersey where she was, or Texas where she came from, or Oakland, California where I live, food stamps are still the number 1 child nutrition program, if unsung. People think about school meals. They think about WIC. But no matter how old your child is, food stamps is there for you. No matter what day of the week it is, food stamps are there for you. In California, two out of three of the people on the program are children. Ninety percent are families with children. It is our number one child nutrition program.

Well, why do food banks care about food stamps? Of course, we have our mission of ending hunger, but beyond that it is also in our self-interest. The Food Stamp Program is a lot bigger than we are and we need it to be that way, the frontline. We are the second line. But in California only half the folks who are eligible are currently getting benefits, and they are getting $400 less than they did ten years ago. So what are the food banks doing? They are trying to fill that gap and we can't do it alone. Our goal is to partner with the Food Stamp Program, promote the Food Stamp Program, not replace it. So we have only the food stamp outreach contract in California. We contract with 48 CBOs, food banks and nonprofits, in 22 counties, aiming to reach 135,000 people this year. We have a similar contract on nutrition education, aiming to reach 115,000 people, integrating those two messages. Here are benefits to help you buy food. Here is how to buy and prepare and consume healthy food.

So what does all that work on the frontline teach us? It teaches us that there are three things we need to do. First of all, families need enough money to buy healthy food. A dollar a meal is not going to do. It is going to fill your plate, but it is not truly going to nourish your child. That coupled with nutrition education is

needed. Second, we have to serve all people. We have started carving out immigrants, single adults, certain ex-offenders. That has complicated the rules on the ground. Kids, particularly in immigrant families, the rules are confusing and those kids do not get served. Another thing, surely we want parents to be saving for their kids. We want parents saving for tuition and we want them saving for apartment security deposits, for a rainy day, for that health bill. The asset test keeps those families out. Finally, one thing we also want is many doors into the Food Stamp Program. The only door can't be the county welfare office. We want that door to be open and friendly, but we also want the health clinic, we want the school and we want the food bank to be doors in.

Many of you all who were around before, thank you much for the EBT card. We appreciate that here in California, the Golden State Advantage Card, but there is more to do to bring technology and modernize this program. We are still fingerprinting every adult in California. We don't have to do that anymore to really make sure we have integrity in the program. Those are the food stamp asks we have of you. Finally, I do need to mention that the emergency food programs have declined in California and nationwide. We have lost 5,000 folks off the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. We have also lost about 40 million pounds in emergency food assistance, because I am glad to hear the farmers are doing well, but that means less food is coming to our food banks and we are feeling that, particularly of the citrus freeze. We did not have the food in the system that we have had in years past to respond quickly and really needed State help and now we are coming to the Feds to help us respond to that freeze as well.

Let me just close with a story. I was very privileged a few years ago when Katrina hit, to go spend three weeks at the Bay Area Food Bank, helping respond with the food bank there, the Bay Area Food Bank. And one of the weekends I was there was the weekend you all were rolling out disaster food stamps at the convention center and it really was a wonderful thing to see this program serving children and serving families in their time of need and I call on you today to make sure this program doesn't just work in times of disaster, but in the everyday emergencies of the families we see all the time. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wade appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BACA. I want to thank all of the panelists for their testimony. At this time, we will open up to some of the questions and I will start, first of all, with Mr. Weill. In your testimony, you talked about the strength of the Food Stamp Program, but you also mentioned that you think that the benefit levels are not adequate in keeping pace with the inflation. What impact do you think it will have on the diet health of people who rely on the program? And what do you think we could do to fix the problem, especially as I look at and I heard the last two witnesses right now testify about Kansas and the need in that area, and we are not keeping up with the inflation and I just asked a couple of questions. Alaska and Hawaii have different rates in terms of the food stamps and yet, when I see California and some of the other States, that it is very difficult for some of the families, some of the poor families, to feed

their families based on a household of three. It is difficult on a gross income of $1600 to pay for their children under food stamps. So can you address that too, as well? I mean, it is so difficult and yet, you know, we talk about nutrition and the health and the obesity that is there, but yet, how can you feed a family when we have not even made the adjustment based on the inflation and the growth and yet only two States are higher and every other State has a standardized flat rate for food stamps no matter what the cost is for each State.

Mr. WEILL. Two things, Mr. Chairman. The program benefits were inadequate before the 1996 law and some built-in provisions of the 1996 law keep pushing those benefits lower compared to inflation. And the result of that in terms of nutrition and obesity is significant. There is more and more evidence coming out that when families do not have enough resources to buy adequate foods and healthy foods, they get into cycles of sort of feast and famine. When there is enough food the first week, two weeks of the month, they eat enough food and sometimes more than enough food, because there are either physiological or psychological changes that come from not having enough food at all or any food the last week of the month. And so there is more and more evidence that ties inadequacy of food resources to obesity and of course to other nutritional deficits. So the answer to that is to get benefits up to a level that are adequate to meet families' basic needs. And everybody on this panel, I believe, has called on Congress to start moving in that direction this year.

Your question about the difference in benefits from State to State, Alaska and Hawaii, of course, have radical cost differences from the 48 continental States and those differences were built into the program. While prices vary from State to State and community to community from food, those differences are relatively small compared to differences in housing and compared to differences with Alaska and Hawaii. So one of the strengths of the Food Stamp Program is its core national structure. The rules are essentially the same State to State. The benefit amount, the same income levels are the same. The entitlement is national. So while I understand the interest in looking at benefit differences and cost differences from State to State, I think it is important to keep the important national strengths of this program in mind as well.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. But I realize that the housing is so high, especially in California compared to some of the other States, and yet, you know, when you have a family, you know, you are paying an average home, $350-some thousand now. And that is just the standard average compared to buying a home in some of the other States where you are paying $150,000. Or if you are renting, the average rent right now, it is $900 and that is at the low rate, renting at $900 per month, and it becomes so difficult and yet you are talking about people right now that have to determine between the Food Stamp Program, paying the rent and trying to feed a family that are underfed right now and we are talking about children that are being affected too, as well.

Mr. WEILL. That is a great point. The program does in part, and I should have said this before, compensate for those differences in housing and child care costs, because families can deduct from

their countable income in the program, what are called excess shelter costs and child care costs. So in a place like California where those costs are higher, at least some of those costs are offset by the ability to deduct them.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you. Ms. Chilton, there is a lot of concern on the committee and in Congress about childhood obesity and other nutritional-related issues. Do you have any comments about how the Food Stamp Program responds to obesity, diabetes and other nutritional-related health diseases?

Ms. CHILTON. Again, we are mostly looking at children who are age zero to three. In our own sample of almost 24,000 children, we found no relationship between food stamps and obesity among these very young children. And I also wanted to remind you, in my written testimony and also in Jim Weill's testimony, we talked about the study that found that girls whose families were receiving food stamps were much less likely to be obese. The importance of food stamps for protecting childhood obesity and protecting children from diabetes is very important, because it gives children and it stretches the family food dollar so that they can purchase healthier foods. So I am not sure about the research with older children, related to diabetes and food stamps, but in our own study, we found no relationship, again, between food stamps and obesity and that is something to, again, think about, is that food stamps increase the diversity of the kinds of foods that families can buy and having a diversity of foods means good nutrition for families.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Janet, in your testimony, you point out that the Latino children face higher food insecurity and poverty than other children. Do you think there is a direct result of Latino children missing out on food stamps?

Ms. MURGUIA. Yes, that is what we have seen, is that there is still so many, not just Latino citizen children who are still having trouble participating in the system, but of course, I also know that, as was noted consistently by every panel member up here, that we still have many legal immigrant children who could benefit from this. And we obviously want to see those benefits restored to those legal immigrant children and then look for ways that we can make the program more accessible to Latino families, and I mentioned in my testimony how important it is to work with institutions and organizations where the families we know already go to and trust. Many are Latino community-based organizations that have health clinics that they are running, or preschool centers that they are running, or run charter schools, or run any number of different efforts that they are engaging Latino families. We should find ways to build those organizations into the system so that they are getting the information to these families in a more effective way.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. And it has also been my understanding that many people who are eligible for government benefits sometimes do not apply because they lack strong English skills. This includes both citizens and legal immigrants. How would you rate the USDA's assistance to limited English proficiency families in respect to the Food Stamp Program? And this is a constant problem and I know that the Under Secretary indicated that they need to do a better job in doing the outreach and reaching out to our communities, because many of the Hispanic members within the commu-

nities don't even know that they are even eligible to receive assistance.

Ms. MURGUIA. That is right. Well, and I think that is right. I mean, there is a lot more work to be done by the USDA and again, her reference to reaching out to States is helpful, but it is not enough. We have got to drill down deeper into the communities where these families actually live and it is not just in urban areas, as you know. You have heard from the rural communities and there are many community-based organizations and faith-based organizations that do interact with these families and can be more culturally competent in working with those parents in different languages. And I will remind folks, it is not just Latino immigrants. We are talking about immigrants who speak a different language besides Spanish. And we want to make sure that we are able to have these programs be accessible to those families so that these kids, especially, can get that kind of assistance. So we need to do a lot more work and we are prepared to do our part in working with the USDA and with you all as we reauthorize the bill, the Farm Bill. Thank you.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you very much. Mr. Bonner.

Mr. BONNER. I would love to have the time to ask each of you a question because your testimony has been very enlightening and I am going to try to get about two or three questions in. Let me start with Ms. Massey. First of all, thank you for over almost 30 years of dedicated service to the people of Alabama, and you certainly have set a wonderful example for all of us in public service. In your opening statement, you indicated that the Food Stamp Program had been a godsend to many hungry children in the State of Alabama. Based on your work in both Baldwin County, which is one of the fastest growing counties and more affluent than many in the southeast, and your home county, Washington County, which is one of the most economically challenged and more rural counties in the State of Alabama, can you comment on the importance of not only a strong Food Stamp Program, but also the overall importance of a healthy nutritious lifestyle for our youth? And specifically, can you tell the difference when you come from a rural area or you are at a fast-growing area, is there really a difference between the child who needs that extra help?

Ms. MASSEY. Congressman Bonner, I would have to say there really isn't a difference. I think children across the board have the same basic needs. And again, as I mentioned in my testimony, the need for food is so basic for our children, for everyone. I have seen over the years, particularly with my work in child welfare, and I mentioned that as well in my testimony, that a lot of children that we hear reports on in the neglect area are children who are not being fed properly. So we see that as a gap and our Food Stamp Program has just, as I mentioned again, has been a godsend to these families. A lot of families we might receive a neglect report on have no idea what food stamp benefits are available to them and we can start working with them and get them on the program and help them with their nutrition and education of nutrition and healthy choices, a healthy lifestyle, and we are able to help them to reduce the amount of neglect that we see across both counties,

in Washington County, which was very economically depressed, as well as there in Baldwin County.

Mr. BONNER. Ms. Wade, I would like to pick up on a comment that you made, and we do appreciate your coming to our area after Hurricane Katrina. The Bay Area Food Bank is a source of pride, that we are all very proud of the role that they have played. But being with the food banks, you can probably appreciate this better than some might and that is the role. We know that government has a role to play. The Food Stamp Program is a good example of the partnership between the Federal government and the State government and the people. But what about the nonprofits? What about the faith-based groups? What about the other groups, especially as you reach out to try to educate people about benefits that they may be entitled to but they are not seeking? How do the nonprofits play a role, and especially through the work that you might do with the food banks?

Ms. WADE. Sure. You are right, the food banks do have a long history of partnering with USDA on the emergency food programs. We work with a network of charities, congregations. Most of the food pantries and soup kitchens we work with are faith-based. That is exactly right. What is new for us is partnering with other USDA programs, including food stamp outreach and nutrition education, and we do that because it is a such a valuable resource for the people we serve and we need to help make that connection. So for example, when USDA rolls out an outreach campaign, we want that phone number to ring at the food bank and make sure someone of the right language who is trusted can help them work through the food stamp application. We know the best case scenario for us and the California food banks is we are trying to do three things, give them more California-grown fruits and vegetables, help them get nutrition education to know how to shop and use those fruits and vegetables, and then give them the food stamp benefits and they can go out and buy that for themselves. We see those three things all going hand in hand, the nutrition education, the food stamps and the emergency foods. So for us it is just learning how to use all of the tools, the nutrition toolbox, to help families get on their feet.

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Chairman, if I might just throw this up to the entire panel and if anyone of you feels so inclined, can take a bite at it. The challenge we are going to face in writing the new Farm Bill obviously comes with fiscal restraint or fiscal constraints placed upon us because of a war that we are fighting and other challenges that are equally as important, access to healthcare and other challenges that we look to every day as a Nation. This is obviously an important part of our bill, but does anyone have a magic solution out there that would help us stretch the limited dollars that we have go further, especially as it relates to the Food Stamp Program? We have got a taker.

Mr. WEILL. Well, it won't surprise you that I don't have a magic solution, but I would just quickly emphasize that we are talking here about investing in children in a way that solves long-term fiscal and economic problems that increases productivity and reduces government health costs. So I apologize that I can't help you with today's fiscal problem, but from a longer-term point of view, this is

a magic bullet. It is magical medicine and it is a magical bullet for the Nation's fiscal problems.

Mr. BONNER. Thank you.

Ms. CHILTON. Am I allowed to add something?

Mr. BACA. Yes.

Ms. CHILTON. Just to not only just reiterate about investing in young children, but also, I think that basing your fiscal decisions on evidence is something that we strive for in science and we hope that you take the evidence that was presented to you today and be fiscally responsible and invest where there is evidence.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you. Anybody else want to tackle it? And if not, I would like to call on the gentlewoman from Kansas. Nancy.

Ms. BOYDA. Thank you and thanks to each of the panelists for your very excellent remarks. I would kind of like to address perhaps the elephant in the room and at least in my district, we are going in the wrong direction in many, many, many ways. We represent, in the 2nd, District, why the mean income is going up and the medium income is going down. That is the 2nd District of Kansas. When you look globally, we are seeing more and more disparity between people who have food and people who don't, people who have wealth and people who don't, people who can raise their family securely and people who don't. It just seems like we are losing ground and I follow up on Mr. Bonner's. We are losing ground at a time when our fiscal restraints are hitting us harder and harder. So in this room today, my guess is that each one of us thinks that we ought to be out there taking care of our children and our families and food stamps is a good idea. We are losing ground on another war and I will go straight to the issue of immigration.

We are becoming a very intolerant Nation in many, many of our parts and we need to recognize that that is what is going on. I don't mind saying that I think that we need to enforce our immigration laws and I have said that directly, but I have also told people in my district that I refuse to have somebody speak to me hatefully or send me e-mails about any group of people and that is happening constantly and it is happening in my district. And my question to you, you are the nonprofits and you are the NGOs and you are working with our faith-based organizations and my question to you is, what are we doing from our pulpits, from our temples, from anywhere, to go back to people of faith and start talking about issues and start turning around what is going on, because the direction that we are headed is getting worse, not better. And somewhere or another we need to get a message into the pulpits on Sunday morning that, you know, no matter what faith you are, I happen to be a Christian and the bottom line is Matthew, Mark, Luke and John talk a whole lot about this issue, you know, a whole lot about it and yet I don't hear this coming from the grassroots in my district. What I do hear, you all would not be very pleased in hearing. I will be quite honest. So let us talk about the elephant in the room. What do we do about that? What are you doing to interact with our faith communities?

Ms. MURGUIA. I would be happy to take a first stab at that and I appreciate you raising the question, because I think there are many people who first often confuse legal immigrant children with undocumented children and I want to be very clear that everything

we are talking about today and the history of the Food Stamp Program, we are talking about children who are here legally. And I think sometimes people paint with this broad brush and they try to confuse the issue. There should be no confusion when it comes to this program, which is essential, and I will say that I commend Ms. Massey for quoting Mother Theresa, so you may have missed that, Congresswoman, but the faith-based community I think can also be relevant, but let me get to the broader point. Look, we are fighting on a larger scale to get comprehensive immigration reform and we understand in working with a broad coalition, left, right, Republicans, Democrats, labor and business, faith-based communities and civil rights organizations, that we have come together and offered a comprehensive bipartisan solution that we know is going to be advanced, we believe, in both chambers this year. We must get that broader issue off the table so that it doesn't confuse and limit the ability for us to deal with other issues that we know are important to children and families across this country, particularly Latino kids and families. So we must get comprehensive immigration reform done so that we can get this cloud that seems to come over every issue when we talk about anything related to oftentimes Hispanic or immigrant kids. But let us be really clear. This program today and everything we are talking about today affects only legal immigrant kids and there should be no confusion about that and there should be no hesitation in the Congress to deal with that.

Ms. BOYDA. We are limiting. As we talked about, we are cutting out whole groups of people out of this and again, it is the direction that we are headed that I find very troubling and those of us who are in this room believe in this program and think that we ought to be out there doing it. What I am asking you all, I am actually asking you to get involved. I would like to see what we are doing and I talk to people back in my district and say, you know, why aren't you talking to your minister? Why isn't this being discussed from the pulpit on Sunday morning? I hear back virtually, with very limited exceptions, that the faith-based community has not taken on issues and issues that affect our families like this and I would just ask that, as I know you are the private sector, can we start bringing in issues and getting the popular conversation going around this? I think it would make a big difference in the long run and start to return to an America that I would be a little bit more comfortable and a little bit more proud of on a given day.

Mr. BACA. Thank you.

Mr. WEILL. If I may just add quickly one point there. As Kim Wade indicated, a huge part of the America's Second Harvest Network is faith-based and there is a group of virtually every religious denomination represented in Washington, called the Food Policy Working Group, that works on food stamps and related issues with members of the Congress and with the grassroots of the denominations. So I believe you will be hearing from the Food Policy Working Group after your——

Ms. BOYDA. Good, good. Anything that you can do. Have at it. Hallelujah. Thank you.

Mr. BACA. Okay. Thank you very much. Next, before I do, and thank you very much, Janet, for clarifying that the Farm Bill is

about legal immigrants and those citizens that are eligible and this is what we are doing now in reference to the legislation. There is a misconception out there about everybody else that is eligible. So this is about legal immigrants and citizens and children that are eligible for the Food Stamp Program and this is what we are dealing with right now. But I am glad for the clarification. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Dr. Chilton, in looking at these issues with the facts, as you suggest, is there a study that demonstrates the dollars saved, as Mr. Weill indicated about the investment in children? Is there a study that demonstrates the dollars saved in healthcare down the road? I think one of the most serious issues we face in the country today is the unaffordability of healthcare and I would like for you to relate to me, if you can, what we can do to reduce healthcare costs through nutrition programs.

Ms. CHILTON. Thank you for your question. If you will look in my written testimony, I cite a few studies that show that food stamps can reduce Medicaid costs for children who are malnourished and suffering from anemia. As well, I just wanted to remind you about the cost of the hospitalization for a pediatric illness. It is about the same cost as what it is to support a family of four for several years on food stamps. I am not aware myself of particular studies that look at the economics on the long term for children, so I would be happy to investigate that and submit that along with my testimony and I welcome anybody else's comments.

Mr. MORAN. I appreciate your response and I appreciate your offer of help. And then, Ms. Wade, you discussed this in your testimony and I had made a note that I wanted to explore this at least from a Kansas perspective, is how the Food Stamp Program fits in, in conjunction with private entities, church-related groups, with the School Lunch and Breakfast Program. Are there formal arrangements between the recipients of foods stamps and their involvement in other programs to help meet further their nutrition needs?

Ms. WADE. The one area is the outreach. In California, we have a master plan of about five steps that we ask our charities and congregations to do, beginning with information and moving on to application assistance to help individuals through the process. So they come to that interview. Maybe we even scheduled that interview for them. We have an envelope with all of the paperwork you have to bring. Maybe we have the interview at the food bank. All kinds of things to help them through the process. But the other thing we are trying to do in California this year is create other doors in, so that once you are on MediCal, you are automatically on food stamps. Some States have, if you are on SSI, you are automatically on food stamps. School lunch, automatically on food stamps. We are asking the same questions. It is the same families. They are working families by and large. We don't need them spending more time going through paperwork and red tape. Let us get them the benefits they need. So those practices on the ground of making the direct connection with individuals and the programs and policies at the State and county level, to have a one-stop shops for families where we are focusing.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Brunk, any different response from a Kansas perspective?

Mr. BRUNK. No, I think that there is a vigorous relationship of cooperation among all the private providers working, I think, diligently to see how they can coordinate services and be more effective. I will say, in reference to some earlier comments, that there is no food bank director, there is no food pantry director that I have spoken to who thinks that the solution is absent really improving the Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program everybody sees as the first line of defense. There is just no way that food banks and other private providers can meet the need that is out there and I think that the community as a whole believes that we need to strengthen the Food Stamp Program. The private sector will continue doing what they are doing, but without the Food Stamp Program, a lot of people would be in much worse shape than they are now.

Mr. MORAN. Much of your testimony, Mr. Brunk, as it should be, related to children, as has been several of our other witnesses. My assumption is that in Kansas there is a significant, and I know we have a significant elder population, and my assumption is that there are significant nutrition and hunger issues with seniors.

Mr. BRUNK. Absolutely. And elderly folks are obviously one of the beneficiaries of the Food Stamp Program, so that when we are strengthening the Food Stamp Program, we are not only benefiting the younger generation, we are also benefiting the older generation.

Mr. MORAN. In many communities, I, again, assume in Kansas, food stamps would be the only access to nutrition programs, in addition, I assume, for children, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. But we would have a wide array of communities in which there is no community pantry, no opportunity for the private sector, at least no one is taking it because we are so rural.

Mr. BRUNK. I think that is true and I think that raises a related question, which is, if you look at the map of Kansas, I don't have it with me, but SRS, our Social and Rehabilitation Services agency provides a map, by county, with the number of food stamps recipients and the participation rate, and if you look at that map, the broad sense that you get is that, as you move further west, the participation rate drops and I think there is some sort of logistical reasons for that. As you well know, Representative Moran, in those frontier counties and those rural counties, we are struggling with keeping the population. Those are the counties that are depopulating and the folks that are remaining there increasingly, I believe, elderly citizens and families with young children who economically don't have the wherewithal to move some place else for greater opportunities, and so hunger is a real problem in rural areas of Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. I don't know whether the chairman intends to have another round of questions. If he does, I have other questions, but my time has expired.

Mr. BACA. I don't, because I think we have exhausted the time that we have here, but if you want, do you want to ask another set of questions?

Mr. MORAN. Just to follow up, then, a bit on that topic. In rural communities, one of the things that has happened in our State is

that SRS has reduced the number of offices. We have consolidated State services into more regional centers. I assume, again, there is a consequence in those rural communities to access to social and rehabilitating services in our State, and access to nutrition programs?

Mr. BRUNK. Right, that is very true. Many offices have closed down over the last several years as a kind of cost-cutting efficiency measure. That has been something that has been of great concern to me from the very beginning. Supposedly there are new tools, mainly the Internet and the phone, that families can access, but frankly, I am not sure how many of those families are comfortable with using the Internet. And so the loss of that face-to-face contact, I am not sure that anybody has said this yet, but it is a matter of concern to me, because I think, as you lose face-to-face contact, it is very likely that families who would earlier be accessing services might not be accessing them now.

Mr. MORAN. I appreciate that very much from a rural perspective. And finally, Mr. Brunk, I wanted to give you a chance. You indicated something in the President's budget that you appreciated, related to including high child care costs as an offset to income guidelines or standards. I want you to just explain to me why that is so important.

Mr. BRUNK. Yes, thank you, Representative Moran. There are, by the way, a few things in the President's budget related to food stamps that I don't appreciate, but one of the things that I do appreciate is that the President proposes that the child care costs of families be basically taken out of the calculation for food stamps. I think that is very important because, really, families right now are often facing the choice between paying for child care, which is very expensive, especially if you want to get good child care, and paying for food. So by disallowing those child care costs, I think that you are now making families make that choice. It is a very good proposal and I hope it is a proposal that you and other members of the committee will endorse.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much. Before we adjourn, I just want to thank all of you for taking the time to share your knowledge and your expertise with us today, and what each of you do for our children who live with hunger and poverty is extremely important and we appreciate your dedication to our families and all of your hard work. I know that we have got a lot of hard work still ahead of us and hopefully that we can continue to have hearings on this important issue that impacts a lot of us as we move the Farm Bill. And hopefully we can look at ideas in reaching out and developing programs, not only as we look at the suggestions that were just mentioned now, we talk about after school programs, we talk about No Child Left Behind, maybe we should develop, you know, after school nutritional programs too, as well. I mean, we talk about after school programs, so maybe something that we can incorporate too, as well, and some of the suggestions that we need to do for a lot of our children. But I believe that we have got a lot of work ahead of us.

I believe that the testimony that was heard today reinforces my belief that the Food Stamp Program is essential to providing long-

term well-being for our children. And I know it is important for a lot of us, and I know Mr. Bonner talked about his children and his experience, and a lot of us can talk about our own personal experience and I know, coming from a large family of 15 and I am the 15th child and I know what it was like growing up and having a lot of tortillas and frijoles, you know, during that period of time and changing our habits and I know that now at my age, I ended up having a heart attack because maybe I ate too much frijoles and tortillas and should have had something else during that period of time. But we have got to change our habits of eating.

But it is part of an educational process that we have to go and educate in our communities and what needs to be done and we realize the importance, but we also realize it is important that a lot of our children and our community are aware that it is important that they have good nutrition and food stamps, not only for our seniors or disabled, but we want to make sure that it is healthy for them, because it is investment that, if we invest now, it is a savings to us both in health and future and improving the quality of life for all us. So the taxpayers end up saving in the long run if we invest now versus saving at the end. And too often we think only in terms of what the cost is now, but we really should look at what the cost will be in the future, because it is really reducing the cost. We will end up paying one way or the other by providing those health services that we should have done if we had done the preventative at the very beginning, and this is what we are talking about. So hopefully through good nutrition and proper education and food stamps, we can help our country produce healthy and active adults for generations to come. With that, I thank you. I leave closing remarks for my minority chair, Mr. Bonner.

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing, and to each of the panelists, thank you for coming and sharing your very insightful stories. Every person in this room, whether you are a panelist of a member or you have been in the back, can relate to a child that we know that has benefited because of the concern and the love that our government, our communities, our organizations, and more importantly, our individuals care to share with that child and the impact you leave on that person is oftentimes lasting. So thank you for being here with us today. It has been an enlightening and very informed meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BACA. Thank you. Before we adjourn, under the rules of the committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for ten days to receive additional materials and supplemental written responses from witnesses to any questions posed by members of the panel. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOE BACA

Welcome to the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry for the 110th Congress.

I look forward to a busy and productive session.

As we look at the Farm Bill, all of us know we have a huge responsibility to America's families and farmers.

But none of our obligations are as important as the reauthorization of the Food Stamp program.

Food stamps are one of our country's greatest safety net programs.

And it helps to feed 26 million legal residents—most of which are children, senior citizens, the disabled, and those living in poverty.

For over 70 years, our government has taken on the moral responsibility to feed those who cannot feed themselves.

And this year will mark the 30th anniversary of the passage of the 1977 Food Stamp Act.

It is appropriate that we mark this anniversary with the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

We must work to ensure that our country's long tradition of combating poverty, hunger, and disease continues through a strong nutrition title and Food Stamp Program.

Over the years, the Food Stamp program has changed and grown with the needs of our society.

Many people misunderstand how Food Stamps work and how effective the program is.

To help correct this mistaken view, today's hearing will focus specifically on how the Food Stamps support the childhood health and nutrition.

This topic is near to my heart as the representative of California's 43rd district, where Hispanics are twice likely to suffer from diabetes.

Studies also show that one in four Hispanic boys ages 6 through 11 is obese.

The rate among other groups is one in six.

Neither of these statistics are acceptable and they need our attention NOW.

As citizens of the wealthiest country in the world, I believe we have a moral obligation as public service to provide good, nutritious food to all our people.

But even if you don't agree with my philosophy, there is a strong ECONOMIC argument to be made.

The World Bank estimates that 12% of our nation's healthcare spending is related to obesity.

That equals $90 billion dollars each year!

My fellow Members of Congress might be interested to also know that almost HALF of that amount is being paid with federal dollars through Medicare and Medicaid.

Good nutrition isn't a just a "feel good" issue.

It affects our budget, our economy, our education system, and the health of our nation!

Before we hear from our distinguished witnesses, I want to thank the Members of the subcommittee.

I deeply appreciate your heartfelt interest in children's health and nutrition.

Each of you who attended our organizing meeting last month expressed your concern about this issue.

And I look forward to working with each of you to make the Food Stamp program a pro-nutrition, pro-healthy lifestyle program that responds to the needs of our kids and working families.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JO BONNER

Good morning. Let me begin by thanking today's witnesses who have agreed to appear before the committee regarding the federal food stamp program and its impact on children's health. I am pleased that we are able to hear from such distinguished individuals and do appreciate your willingness to testify. I am especially pleased that one of my constituents, Rene Massey, will appear before us today during the second panel and offer her expertise as Director of the Department of Human Resources in Baldwin County, Alabama.

The federal Food Stamp Program, established over 40 years ago, has played an important role in food security for low-income households throughout the United States. A great number of individuals and families in our country depend on these benefits. In fact, according to the most recent data available, over 45,000 households in Alabama's First Congressional District are currently receiving food stamp benefits. That's almost 18 percent of total households in my district.

The purpose of today's hearing, to review how this program impacts the health of our children, could not have come at a better time given the obesity crisis our nation is facing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites two surveys, one from 1976–1980, and the other from 2003–2004, to illustrate the prevalence of overweight children. Between those two timeframes, the prevalence of overweight

children aged 2–5 years increased from 5.0% to 13.9%; for those aged 6–11 years, prevalence increased from 6.5% to 18.8%; and finally, for those aged 12–19 years, prevalence increased from 5.0% to 17.4%.

It is absolutely imperative we do what we can to help curb this epidemic. Educating our children with regard to what is healthy versus what is not healthy is one of the things we can do to help in this effort. Like many young boys growing-up, I know I didn't always like hearing from my mother to eat my broccoli, but it's that type of education we need in order to help be successful. As the father of two young children, trust me, I know how hard that can be. However, we must work to educate, in addition to providing our children the types of nutritious foods they need in their daily diets.

USDA, in the summary of their 2007 Farm Bill Proposal, states that children under 18 years of age generally consume 50 percent or less of the recommended levels of fruit and vegetables. The summary goes on to say that providing increased fruit and vegetable options in the food assistance programs can help increase consumption as well as improve the quality of many Americans' diets. I agree with this assessment and know we need to work to improve the nutrition aspect of the Food Stamp Program as we move forward in the 2007 Farm Bill process.

Our subcommittee's first hearing of the 110th Congress will no doubt provide some valuable insight as we address this important topic. I look forward to hearing from USDA and the various individuals from around the country who will testify today to share some of their knowledge and experience in this field.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for time this morning to provide an opening statement, and I look forward to working with you and the other members of our subcommittee on this, and other topics of interest.

STATEMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN COLLIN C. PETERSON

Thank you, Chairman Baca for recognizing me to speak and for holding this hearing today. I also want to thank the USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services and all of our witnesses for testifying here today.

The Food Stamp program helps more than 26 million Americans, and that number is on the rise. The Congressional Budget Office recently projected that the cost of the current Food Stamp and Child Nutrition programs over the next ten years would be about $565 billion. This is 45 percent higher than CBO's ten-year cost projection made five years ago after the 2002 Farm Bill passed. These numbers reveal the fact that more people are relying on our current nutrition programs for help, and while it might look like there is more money for nutrition programs, this is actually just the cost of continuing with the programs currently in place.

Half of those who receive food stamps today are children. Every day, we see reports and new data that suggest that if children do not have adequate nutrition, they suffer at school and beyond. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the ways our current system of nutrition programs meets the needs of children and how we can improve the effectiveness of these programs.

As the Agriculture Committee begins to write the Farm Bill, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of all Americans—farmers and ranchers, consumers who expect a safe and abundant supply of food and fiber, as well as those who count on the Farm Bill's food and nutrition programs for a square meal. This is a tremendous responsibility for the Committee, and we intend to fulfill it to the best of our ability.

Chairman Baca, thank you again for holding this hearing today on this very important issue, and I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses here today.

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BOB GOODLATTE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, the Federal Food Stamp program consumes nearly two-thirds of the budget allocated to this Committee. Since FY2003, Federal costs have grown from $20.6 billion to in excess of an estimated $33 billion for FY2006. The food stamp program was intended as an income supplement to help individuals and families meet their nutritional needs. And I'm curious if the program is still functioning as it was intended to function. I'm afraid it creates a cycle of dependency that lasts for generations and American taxpayers ultimately end up paying for this rapidly expanding welfare program.

I have led congressional efforts to reform the federal food stamp program and to end food stamp waste, fraud, and abuse. These reforms are aimed at protecting the integrity of the program so that it continues to have the public support it needs to accomplish its purpose of helping meet the nutritional needs of those most in need. I believe we should limit categorical eligibility to people who receive cash TANF or

SSI assistance, thereby concentrating the available funding in the segments of the population who need it the most. I'm concerned about efforts to expand eligibility. Even small changes to eligibility or benefit rules in a program as large as food stamps can lead to relatively large budget costs or savings.

As we review the food stamp program, we need to focus on how to get benefits to those truly in need as effectively and efficiently as possible. Programs such as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistant Program, which provides USDA commodities to states who then distribute the food through local food agencies, such as soup kitchens and food banks, are good models of efficiency in getting food directly to those who need it. Programs like TEFAP allow state and local organizations to meet the nutritional needs of their communities with which they are involved in on a day to day basis. Local administration of nutrition programs ensures that the specific and unique needs of communities across the country.

I'm interested to hear what our witnesses have to say today and I look forward to your testimony.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN NICK LAMPSON

I want to thank Under Secretary Montanez-Johner and all of our witnesses for being here today—to educate and discuss with us the Food Stamp program. The issue of food security for those in need is of great importance to Texas and especially the 22nd Congressional District.

Five percent of households in Texas' 22nd District receive food stamps. While that number may not seem out of the ordinary, we must take into account that only 60% of those eligible participate in the program, and it is estimated that 1 in 10 Texas children are at risk for hunger. This leads to poor concentration at school and poor health, both of which are preventable through a strong, effective, and efficient Food Stamp program and the Food Nutrition System. The number of children helped by food stamps in Texas has increased in the last five years, with one quarter of all Texas children rely on food stamps. But the value of the food stamp benefit has eroded over the years, costing and many families struggle to make it to the end of the month, often relying on private charities to subsidize their food stamp allotment.

I would like to see an increased effort by the USDA and the state to increase enrollment, to promote healthy food choices, and in turn raise healthy, smart kids, and help out America's farmers at the same time.

I would also like to see the USDA—along with the states—improve contingency plans for emergency situations. In September 2005, the Houston area experienced an influx of 100,000 new residents. The Katrina evacuees placed a great strain on our resources across the board. The government provided supplemental caseloads, but they were only temporary. With an estimated 80,000 evacuees remaining in the Houston area, I implore you to use this disaster as a catalyst to reform food aid plans for future crisis situations. We were all caught off guard. Victims waited weeks or months to receive aid. Many food stamp recipients have now been absorbed into our state's system as Texas residents, but many others, especially seniors, lost the aid they were receiving through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Again, thank you for being here today and I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN STEVE KAGEN

Chairman Baca and fellow colleagues: I am pleased to be here today to work hard with my fellow colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I believe that good government makes a real difference in people's lives. The Food Stamp Program rose from a humble origin. Now, it is one of the most important, and most successful programs our Federal Government administers. As we've seen on a grand scale in response to Hurricane Katrina, and what many of our witnesses see locally, on a daily basis, the Food Stamps Program exists solely to assist those in need. As a physician, I deeply understand the value of preventive medicine and this program illustrates this tenet with the marked improvement we see in the health of children who participate. I hope to be a leader on this committee, and I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.

TESTIMONY OF HON. JO ANN EMERSON AND HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

Chairman Baca and Ranking member Bonner,

We are the co-chairs of the Congressional Hunger Center (CHC). This organization administers the Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program and the Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellows Program. We are proud of the work of these young leaders, but the future of the Fellowship funding is in jeopardy and we have specific recommendations on how to resolve this important matter.

Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland, former distinguished Members of the House of Representatives, were deeply involved in helping the poor, the hungry, and the victims of humanitarian crisis, both at home and overseas. They were "leaders" with their words, passions, and action. CHC fights hunger here and abroad by developing future leaders in the fight against hunger and poverty. Representatives Leland and Emerson demonstrated their bi-partisan commitment to ending hunger by serving together on the former House Select Committee on Hunger, and by helping establish the fellowship programs named after them. CHC administers the Emerson/Leland programs as the successor organization to the House Select Committee on Hunger.

The Emersonl/Leland Hunger Fellowships are the only programs in the United States that provide young leaders with the skills, knowledge and experience to end domestic and international hunger. The programs are unique in that they combine field program experience and intensive policy training and placements for these highly qualified young leaders who are accepted into the program.

A critical feature of the Emerson program is the "Hunger Free Community Reports" (See Attachment I) which are completed after the first six months of the program. These reports provide insight on how poor people from those communities face the daily challenge of hunger and provide evidence on how the Food Stamp Program is making a difference in their struggle. Many of the Hunger Free Community Reports are directly connected to the subject of today's hearing: The Food Stamp Program and Its Impact on Child Health. One of our Emerson fellows was placed at the Boston Medical Center working on the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C–SNAP). C–SNAP medical staff conducts research in pediatric settings on the effects of U.S. social policies on low-income child nutrition and health, children whose nutritional status can be positively or negatively affected by changes in policy in programs like Food Stamps and WIC. A CHC Emerson Fellow was assigned to the C–SNAP team. He conducted research, helped produce and disseminate the most recent C–SNAP report on the relationship between low income children, food insecurity, and food stamps. This report, entitled "Food Stamps as Medicine: A New Perspective on Children's Health," provided important findings such as children receiving food stamps are 26 percent less likely to suffer from the negative effects of food insecurity. The connection is strong—food insecurity contributes to developmental problems and poor health among children, and food stamps decreases child food insecurity. C–SNAP research shows that children in food insecure homes are approximately twice as likely to suffer from poor health and one-third more likely to be hospitalized. This report was cited in the testimony of Dr. Mariana Chilton, a C–SNAP physician from Philadelphia, a witness on panel two today.

Other Hunger Free Community Reports cover topics such as the critical importance of providing nutritional support to people living with a life threatening illness, such as HIV/AIDS and diabetes; food insecurity within immigrant communities in Atlanta, Georgia; farmworker justice in Immokalee, Florida; disaster preparedness and access to the Food Stamp Program in Seattle; the story of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their impact on the Second Harvest Food Bank; and many other community level examples of how to fight hunger and poverty. We have attached a summary of the 23 Hunger Free Community Reports, all of which are available electronically should you, Mr. Chairman or Representative Bonner, or your staff like to review them.

Two of the witnesses at today's hearing, Kim McCoy Wade of the California Association of Food Banks and Jim Weill of the Food Research and Action Center, have hosted Fellows working on Food Stamp outreach. All of the witnesses at the recent House Budget Committee hearing on Hunger have hosted Emerson Fellows, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Over a two year period, Emerson Fellows designed and implemented the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Outreach Web site. Dr. Deborah Frank, of the Boston Medical Center, has hosted Emerson Fellows for three years and Denise Holland of the Harvest Hope Food Bank in Columbia, South Carolina, hosted an Emerson Fellow working on Spanish translation of food stamp materials for people visiting food pantries.

Our point here is that the Emerson Hunger Fellowship is working exactly as intended. The Fellowship develops leaders that continue working on issues of social importance in government, nonprofit organizations and the private sector long after their Fellowship has ended.

On the international side, the Mickey Leland Fellows continue their work in USDA and USAID anti-hunger programs, such as school feeding, maternal and child

nutrition programs, microenterprise for women, agricultural cooperatives, HIV/AIDS and nutrition, and emergency food aid provided through Title II of Public Law 480, Food for Peace. Many of these Leland Fellows are now working as program officers and policy analysts for organizations such as Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, Counterpart International, Mercy Corps, American Red Cross, Land O'Lakes, USAID and the UN World Food Program. Together with the Bill Emerson Fellows, they are fulfilling the mandate of Mickey Leland and Bill Emerson in a bi-partisan fight against hunger.

WHY IS FUNDING FOR THE EMERSONL/LELAND FELLOWSHIP IN JEOPARDY?

The FY 2007 Continuing Resolution for Appropriations (CR) removed $2.5 million, or 100% of the program costs for the operation of the Bill Emerson/Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowships. Without these funds, CHC will be forced to close its operations during 2008. The funds were removed because the appropriation was declared an "earmark" and neither the Fellowships nor the administering entity, CHC, met the technical requirements of the authorization contained in the 2002 Farm Bill. If the 2007 Farm Bill is not amended to establish a permanent authorization for the Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowships to be administered through CHC, future appropriations will continue to be at great risk.

CHC has received federal funding to administer the Bill Emerson/Mickey Leland Fellowships since 1994. The programs were established as a memorial to former Representatives Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland and the programs enjoy wide support from both the House and the Senate. But in 2002 the Farm Bill authorized a "Congressional Hunger Fellows" program (identical to the CHC administered Fellowships) as an independent entity of the Legislative Branch of the U.S. government. This program would have two components: A Bill Emerson Hunger Fellowship and a Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowship, administered by a Board of Trustees, appointed by Congress. An authorization for an endowment was included in the Farm Bill as a mechanism for funding the Fellowships. The Congressional Hunger Fellows Program never commenced operations, no legislative branch of government entity was created, no endowment was established and the Board of Trustees never met.

Congress did not implement any elements of the "Congressional Hunger Fellows" program as authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. Instead, Congress provided yearly appropriations for these Fellowships to CHC from FY 02 through FY 07 (mandatory funding in FY 03 and FY 04 and regular annual appropriations through FY 07). However, since the 2002 original authorization for the Fellowships was not amended, the FY07 appropriation was declared an earmark and funds were removed from the CR.

HOW CAN WE ASSURE THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE EMERSON/LELAND FELLOWSHIPS?

First, the 2007 Farm Bill should be amended establishing a permanently authorized Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Program and a Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellowship Program to be administered through the Congressional Hunger Center. Second, mandatory funding of $3 million should be provided for FY 2008 as a part of the Farm Bill. Third and finally, the Emerson/Leland Fellowships should be authorized for "such sums as necessary" in future fiscal years through the USDA to the Congressional Hunger Center. These actions will ensure that the legacy of Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland will continue to inspire the next generation of anti-hunger leaders at home and abroad.

We have attached a list of organizations and Fellow alumni (see Attachment II) that support funding for the Emerson/Leland Fellows along with six letters (see Attachment III) from Fellows and host organizations that illustrate how important the Fellowship is for these future leaders and the organizations in the U.S. and around the world that rely on that leadership.

Attachment I

Emerson National Hunger Fellows
13th Class, 2006-2007

Hunger Free Community Reports

Each year Emerson Hunger Fellows complete a **Hunger Free Community Report** during their field placements. These field projects take many forms, including written reports, websites, videos, toolkits, mapping projects, and presentations. Below is a brief description of the Hunger Free Community Reports completed by the 13th Class of Emerson Fellows.

1. **Closing New Mexico's Food Gap** describes options for increasing access to affordable and nutritious foods in rural and underserved areas of New Mexico and promotes grocery stores as a means of economic development. *By Nicole Alvarado, placed at Farm to Table in Santa Fe, New Mexico*

2. **Food Security within Immigrant Communities in Georgia** illustrates the challenges immigrants face in accessing emergency food and provides recommendations for Food Bank outreach to the growing immigrant population in Georgia. *By Eric Ares and Kaitlin Gravitt, placed at the Atlanta Community Food Bank in Georgia*

3. **When Medicine Isn't Enough: The Benefits of Providing Nutrition Support to People Living with a Life-Challenging Illness** documents a pilot study evaluating health outcomes of critically ill patients that receive comprehensive nutrition services, reported positive outcomes in the areas of health and symptom management, quality of life, food intake and knowledge of nutrition, and weight stabilization and body composition. *By Nikita Barai, placed at Food and Friends in Washington, D.C.*

4. **just don't forget about us: The Story of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their impact on SHFB** chronicles the impact of the 2006 storms on the Second Harvest Food Bank of New Orleans and Acadiana and assesses the current need based on population levels and the prevalence of service networks. It also includes personal stories from hurricane survivors and emergency food providers. *By David Coffman, placed at the Second Harvest Food Bank of New Orleans and Greater Acadiana*

5. MyFoodStamps.org: **A United Outreach Effort in California** is a web-based resource for outreach workers, food assistance advocates, and potential food stamp clients in California, including a comprehensive guide to the food stamp program created in conjunction with Legal Services of Northern California. *By Anyu Fang, placed with the California Association of Food Banks and the Sacramento Hunger Coalition in Sacramento, California*

6. **Running on Empty: Massachusetts Families and the Federal Food Stamp Program** documents the challenges faced by food insecure clients participating in the food stamp clinic and the benefits of approaching food stamps from a health perspective. *By Toni Holness, placed at the Boston Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts*

7. **Putting the Pieces Together: A Component Design for a Community Food Security Center New Orleans Model** is a concept paper outlining potential components for a food security center in New Orleans, including nutrition education, legal aid, and a research endowment. *By J.P. Howard, placed at the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana*

8. **The Paradox of Abundance: Access to Healthy Food in Corona, Queens** evaluates food quality, accessibility, and availability in bodegas and supermarkets in a diverse community in New York City. A 7-minute educational documentary video accompanying the report illustrates the strengths and challenges facing Corona residents seeking access to nutritious food. *By Eliberty Jimenez, placed at FoodChange in New York*

9. **www.summerlunch.org** is a comprehensive website designed to increase participation in the summer lunch program in California. It provides outreach materials, resources, community profiles of model programs, and audio visual clips featuring programs and kids across the state. *By Takhani Kromah, placed at the California Association of Food Banks*

10. **The Grocery Gap Project: Race, Hunger and Food Access** reports examines the relationship between race, poverty, and food access in Seattle. Using the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, the study identifies the availability and cost of healthy foods in Seattle's Rainer Valley and Queen Anne neighborhoods. *By Jamillah Jordan, placed at Solid Ground, Seattle, Washington*

11. **Hunger in Paradise? Sustaining Kupuna: An Overview of Elderly Nutrition Services in Kaua'i** is a simple, accessible disaster preparedness manual designed specifically for senior citizens in Hawaii and has an accompanying case study outlining the food security challenges the low-income elderly face on Kaua'i. *By Amelia Forrest Kaye, placed at Kaua'i Economic Opportunity in Lihue, Hawaii*

12. **Universal Free Breakfast Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools: Preliminary Findings 2006-2007** evaluates the Universal Free Breakfast Initiative in elementary schools and provides recommendations for improving and expanding the impact of the program. *By Megan Lent, placed at the Hunger Task Force in Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

13. **Hungering for Disaster Preparedness: Strategies, Resources, and Tips for Food Pantries and their Coalitions** is a comprehensive guide to emergency preparedness, including a model agency emergency plan, monthly preparedness activities, and a needs assessment for use in food pantries and coalitions of emergency food providers. *By Nicholas Maryns, placed at Solid Ground in Seattle, Washington*

14. **A Sustainable Model of Outreach for Improved Immigrant Participation in the Food Stamp Program: A Case Study of Western Queens** provides a model for food stamp outreach to immigrant communities including resources for setting objectives, identifying a target audience, connecting to local government, and mobilizing community support. *By Sindri McDonald, placed at FoodChange in New York City*

15. **An Exploratory Assessment of High School Breakfast Programs in Milwaukee Public Schools: 2006-2007** evaluates school breakfast programming in Milwaukee Public High Schools and offers recommendations for improving participation rates. *By Amrit Mehra, placed at the Hunger Task Force in Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

16. **Food Stamps as Medicine: A New Perspective in Children's Health** reports on the results of the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, a public health study of nearly 24,000 children, and concludes that food stamps can make a crucial difference in determining a child's health status. It also provides recommendations for future promotion of nutrition and medical services. *By Avi Perry, placed at the Boston Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts*

17. **New Mexico Farm to School Directory 2007: A Directory of Farmers, Crops, and Food Service Directors** is a tool for farmers and food service directors to increase use of local produce in New Mexico Schools. It includes resources to assist individuals involved in New Mexico's food system to better take advantage of nutritious, fresh, local foods. *By Jimmy Purvis, placed with Farm to Table, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

18. **Hidden Hunger: Recognizing Hunger and Maximizing the Food Stamp Program in Nebraska** provides county level data on food insecurity and food stamp participation for all 93 counties in Nebraska and includes a county-level proclamation in support of food stamps. **Fresh for All: A Guide for Accepting Food Stamps at Farmers Markets** outlines steps for vendors to set up manual voucher transactions in farmers markets. *By Sarah Sibley, placed at Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest*

19. **Free for All: An Evaluation of D.C. Public Schools' Universal Free Breakfast Program** illustrates the impact of the Universal Free Breakfast Program in Washington, D.C. and features suggestions from students, faculty, and parents for improving the program and reaching more students. *By Shanique Streete, placed at D.C. Hunger Solutions in Washington, D.C.*

20. **"Kids Benefit, You Benefit" The Nebraska Child Care and Adult Food Program Outreach Initiative** includes case studies and outreach tools for CACFP providers and clients in rural areas. The project also includes a radio and television public service announcement aired in English and Spanish to publicize the CACFP program. *By Srinidhi Vijaykumar, placed at Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest*

21. **Farmworker Justice: Select Tools for Allies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers** educates people about the working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers in Florida and includes historical timelines, an overview of the path a tomato takes from farm to table, and reflections for people of faith. It is designed to contribute to long-term solutions to the needs of farmworkers. *By Kathleen Wood and Katharine Mitchell, placed at the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Immokalee, Florida*

Attachment II

Letters from Fellows and host organizations submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies requesting $3 million in funding for the Emerson/Leland Fellowships through the Congressional Hunger Center in the FY08 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Letters from Fellows:

Ashley Aakesson
Liz Aloi
Estera Barbarasa
Dennis Barrett
Kate Bolz
Beth Brockland
Christine Lee Buchholz
Ryan Buchholz
Patience Butler
Alexis Bylander
Robert Cambell
Shireen Cama
Matt Newell-Ching
Allegra Cira
Sean Coffey
Philip Colvin
Yesenia Garcia
Kate Gigliotti
Natalie Halbach
Britt Jacobson
Carrie Johnson
Michael Johnson
Alison Lett
Rosa Lugos Carpenter
Andrea Maresca
Katy Mastman
Lucinda Megill
Ivan Moore
Bridget Murphy
Dan Murphy
Alisha Myers
Robert Oliver
Amy Park
Shawn Powers
Stacy Roen
Laura Russ

Micah Schwartz*
Judith Stermer
Laura Tatum
Jeanine Valles
Justin Weinstein-Tull
Elizabeth Whelan
Deanna Wilson
Karen Wong

Letters from Allied Organizations:

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
Alliance for Food Aid
Alliance to End Hunger
America's Second Harvest, the Nation's Food Bank Network
Association for International Agriculture for Rural Development
Association of Arizona Food Banks
Association of Nutrition Services Agencies (ANSA)
Atlanta Community Food Bank
Bread for the World
California Food Policy Advocates
Catholic Charities, USA
Catholic Relief Services
Center for Economic Progress (Chicago, IL)
Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP), Boston Medical Center
Christian Children's Fund
Community Food Bank, Tucson
Community Food Security Coalition
Connecticut Association for Human Services
Counterpart International
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Washington Office
Families USA
Florida Impact
Food Bank of Alaska
Food Change (NYC)
Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
Hunger Task Force (Milwaukee, WI)
International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD)
KCE Public Affairs Associates
Land of Lakes
Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, Boston Medical Center
Mercy Corp
The Molpus Advisory Group, L.L.C.*
National CACPF Forum

National Coalition for the Homeless
National Conference of State Legislatures
New York City Coalition Against Hunger
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Poverty and Race Research Action Council
Save the Children
School Nutrition Association
Second Harvest of New Orleans and Acadiana
Share Our Strength (SOS)
World Hunger Year

*indicates that letter has been sent, but copy is not included

Attachment III

Natalie Halbach
3185 Kimberly Ln.
Plymouth, MN 55447

The Honorable Representative Laura DeLauro
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2007

Dear Representative DeLauro:

As a recently graduated member of the 12th class of Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows, I write to urge you to fund the Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowship programs at a level of $3 million in the FY08 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The fellowship programs have received strong bipartisan support in Congress since 1994 as a result of the nation-wide impact that Hunger Fellows make on efforts to alleviate poverty and hunger, and because year after year, the programs empower a new generation of inspired leaders for public service. My work as an Emerson Hunger Fellow grew community leaders in a low-income neighborhood of Louisville, Kentucky and shaped my own career goals toward continued work in public policy and public health.

My work in Louisville in the fall of 2005 speaks to the lasting impact of the Hunger Fellowship programs on both Fellows and communities. In my field work, I organized a farmers' market in a low-income neighborhood of Louisville, bringing together local farmers and community members. Though I arrived armed with two weeks of intense training on leadership, the federal nutrition programs, and community responses to poverty, I was completely unprepared for how much I had yet to learn from community organizing work. I felt the fear of a single mother working two jobs who had only $50 left at the end of the month for groceries. I felt the frustration of West Louisville community members who believed that no one in government or the other side of town cared about the fact that they struggled to find fresh, healthy food in their neighborhood, where fast food abounds, but only 3 grocery stores serve 77,000 people. My eyes were opened and I changed. I listen better. I envision a different future more clearly. And I am more determined than before my time in Kentucky to see that future reality.

My experience in Kentucky also impacted the West Louisville community in ways that resonate yet today. Late in the fall, we empowered community members to guide a bus tour that revealed the lack of healthy foods available, but also showcased the new markets and urban farms in lower-income neighborhoods working to address this lack. We watched these leaders grow in confidence and in their belief that they could together change their communities and improve their health. Some of these leaders continue to run the weekly farmers' markets. Using tools I created as part of a report on the deteriorating health conditions in West Louisville, these leaders also now engage with democracy and advocate for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs. Kentucky State Senator Denise Harper Angel is now sponsoring a bill to make FMNP available to low-income mothers and seniors statewide and recently invited me to testify about my research into the positive impacts of the program on health and child development.

Finally, in addition to their impact on communities, the Emerson and Leland Hunger Fellowship Programs truly do develop leaders in the fight to end poverty and hunger. Nearly 60 % of Emerson Fellow graduates have pursued employment in anti-hunger or related social justice organizations and more than two dozen graduates have worked on a non-partisan basis for key Congressional committees and for members of Congress. This fall semester, I will begin study for a master of public health and a master of food policy and applied nutrition at Tufts University. My Emerson experience fundamentally

altered how I will use these degrees. Because the Emerson and Leland Fellowships are the only leadership programs that offer a combined field and policy placement experience, I saw first hand how problems, needs, and solutions, at the community level often fail to play into national policy decisions. After earning my degrees, I hope to help the poor and hungry in my community contribute their voices and stories more effectively to the policy making process. By bridging this field/policy gap that I saw so clearly as an Emerson Fellow, I hope to both speed the end to hunger and restore faith in and enthusiasm for the power of American democracy and citizenship.

Representative DeLauro, without funding in the FY2008 Agriculture Appropriations bill, the Hunger Fellowship programs will close. Malnourished Americans in communities nationwide and the future leadership of our country will suffer as a result. I sincerely hope that you will give these programs top priority in your work this spring.

Thank you very much for your time and concern. If you have any questions, please contact me at the e-mail address below.

Sincerely,

Natalie Halbach
natalie.halbach@gmail.com

RYAN M. BUCHHOLZ, M.I

March 21, 2007

Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture
2362A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

Dear Representative DeLauro:

Greetings from Cincinnati, Ohio! It is my distinct privilege to write to you today on behalf of the Congressional Hunger Center and its fine Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program and Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellows Program. As an alumnus of the national hunger fellows program and now a physician preparing for a career of service in our nation's health professional shortage areas, I would be happy to describe some of the specific ways this program has shaped and changed my life and guided me in service on behalf of the poor. I ask you specifically to request a $3 million appropriation in the FY 08 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Eleven years ago, upon graduation from Harvard University with a degree in Latin American Studies, I had the privilege of earning a poverty-level stipend and learning through firsthand experiences in south Florida and in Washington, DC the myriad ways that poverty and hunger affect the health of our nation. The unique experience bridging field placements with local grassroots organizations fighting hunger and then national organizations in Washington working on hunger-related policy has shaped me into the community-health-oriented physician I am today.

Working with the grassroots organization Farm Share in Miami-Dade County, Florida, I met Jorge C., a 45-year-old over-the-road truck driver whose vision had been ravaged by years of uncontrolled diabetes mellitus. He nearly had his leg amputated, and he lost his vision from the diabetes and could no longer drive a truck. Stripped of his means of making a living and unable to purchase the fresh fruits and vegetables necessary to control his diabetes well, Jorge's doctor had the insight to direct him to Farm Share, a public-private partnership between the state of Florida and a non-profit organization. Before long, Jorge had lost 150 pounds, had a new lease on life, and was a dedicated Farm Share volunteer. He spurred me on to become a physician.

Jorge told me many times that I should remember his story when I became a doctor, and indeed I have. Even as a Hunger Fellow, I shared Jorge's story with then Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, who proceeded to talk about him at national conferences as someone whose life had been changed by the anti-hunger and food recovery efforts of Farm Share. Here in Cincinnati, I recently gave a keynote presentation to the Greater Cincinnati Dietetic Association on the prospects for ending hunger in our time. In my pediatric clinic, I have learned to collaborate with programs such as the Women, Infants, and Children's supplemental nutrition program (WIC) and with local non-profit organizations to ensure that babies and young children receive appropriate nutrition.

As noted above, I am in the National Health Service Corps (part of the U.S. Public Health Service); in other words, I am dedicating my career as a physician to providing primary care for adults and children in U.S. communities that otherwise would lack a doctor. In my free time, I work

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in South Africa with a public hospital there to provide care for children and adults suffering from HIV/AIDS. Let me put it bluntly: I would not be making these efforts had I not served as a National Hunger Fellow. More importantly relative to my personal life, I would never have met Christine Lee, who is now my wife. We met in 1996 in our Hunger Fellow field placement in Florida and are completing our ninth year of marriage and have a two-year-old son.

While I had the opportunity to benefit from the Hunger Fellows Program, young potential leaders in the fight against poverty and hunger will not have that opportunity unless the $3 million appropriation for FY08 is approved. The Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program and the Leland International Hunger Fellows Program are sorely needed in our age of materialism to train up the Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland for tomorrow. The National Program turned this upper middle-class boy into a hunger fighting physician working with Hispanics here in the U.S. and working to stem the AIDS pandemic in South Africa.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my supplication on behalf of the poor.

Sincerely,

Ryan M. Buchholz, M.D.
Pediatrics and Internal Medicine
Cincinnati Children's Hospital and
University of Cincinnati Hospital

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PHONE: 513-351-0573 • E-MAIL: ryanbuchholz@gmail.com

Alisha Myers
c/o CRS/Malawi
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Baltimore, MD 21201
Email: alishamyers@yahoo.com
Phone: +265 (0) 8206625

March 19, 2007

Representative Rosa DeLauro
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeLauro:

I am writing to ask you to urge the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to restore funding to the Congressional Hunger Center (CHC) in the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations Bill for the CHC's Mickey Leland/Bill Emerson Fellowship programs. Funding for these programs was removed in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution for Appropriations because of a new technical requirement which classified them as an "earmark". These programs have bipartisan support in the House and Senate, and have received federal support since 1994. They need a commitment of $3 million dollars in the FY 2008 Appropriations Bill to continue to operate.

As a graduate of the first class of the CHC's Mickey Leland Fellowship program, I have a keen interest in the continuation of this unique program. The Mickey Leland International Fellowship program is the only program of its kind that offers young professionals dedicated to alleviating hunger to gain invaluable work experience addressing hunger issues through field level programming in developing countries and from the policy angle working at the headquarters of international agencies.

From 2001-2003 I served as a Mickey Leland Fellow with Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Based in Nairobi, Kenya, working for CRS' southern Sudan program, I supported programming on food emergencies, agricultural training and food security. Through this experience, I not only learned about, but witnessed, the critical need for food support to war-affected children, families and refugees. Traveling throughout rural southern Sudan allowed me to better understand how alleviating hunger is an international issue of enormous magnitude requiring interventions at both the programming and policy levels. Following this eye-opening experience in Sudan, working in CRS' world headquarters in Baltimore MD, I gained exposure on how engage and educate U.S. government leaders on issues of food security and hunger.

Four years after completing this fellowship, I continue to focus on and remain committed to addressing hunger. In my current position with CRS/Malawi as a Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor, I work to improve the quality and measure the impact of a $70 million USAID funded program designed to improve the livelihoods and strengthen food security among rural Malawians. As a member of the senior management team of our office, I am acutely aware of the CHC's role in equipping me with knowledge and skills that have directly contributed to my professional development in this field. I feel that I am testament to the Congressional Hunger Centers objective of **"Fighting Hunger by Developing Leaders".**

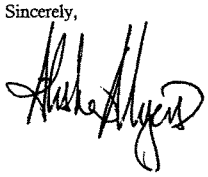
CRS as an agency recognizes the value of this program and has continued to host Mickey Leland Fellows and boasts a 100% retention rate of fellows. The fellowship offers a mutually beneficial relationship and reward for the fellow and CRS, who at the conclusion of the program, has the option of hiring a talented, well-trained development professional who knows the agency from both the field and headquarter

perspective. Moreover, the fellow is part of and has access to an exceptional and global network of leaders working on food security and hunger issues.

I remain deeply committed to the Mickey Leland International Fellows program and feel that its reach and impact is extended by graduates, such as me, who have joined the effort, both domestically and internationally, to fight hunger. Without the $3 million appropriation in the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations bill, the CHC will be unable to contribute to this effort, which allows America to demonstrate its commitment to alleviating hunger worldwide.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information about the Congressional Hunger Center.

Sincerely,



Alisha Myers
CRS/Malawi
Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor

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Hôpital Sainte Croix
Programme Nutrition
BP [illegible]
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
West Indies

In USA
Children's Nutrition Program of Haiti
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P.O. Box [illegible]
Chattanooga, TN [illegible]
Phone [illegible]
Fax [illegible]
www.cnph.org

March 7, 2007

Representative Rosa DeLauro
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeLauro:

I am writing to ask you to urge the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to restore funding to the Congressional Hunger Center (CHC) in the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations Bill for the CHC's Mickey Leland/Bill Emerson Fellowship programs. Funding for these programs was removed in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution for Appropriations because of a new technical requirement which classified them as an "earmark".

The CHC's motto is "**Fighting Hunger by Developing Leaders**", and they have proven that their Fellowship programs do just that. These programs have bipartisan support in the House and Senate, and have received federal support since 1994. They need a commitment of $3 million dollars in the FY 2008 Appropriations Bill to continue to operate.

I am writing to you as one of the anti-hunger leaders who have been shaped through participation in the CHC's programs. I was one of the first class of Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellows from 2001-2003. During that time I was placed at Save the Children, and spent a formative year in remote Southern Ethiopia working on two of Save the Children's USAID funded programs, followed by a year at Save the Children's Washington, DC office. The Leland Fellowship led directly to three years of employment with Save the Children, in Ethiopia and Washington, DC, from 2003-2006, as a technical specialist in food security.

Currently I am the Executive Director of the Children's Nutrition Program of Haiti, a non-profit organization based in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The training and support I received as a Leland Fellow have directly contributed to the knowledge and abilities which enable me to perform as a leader of this rapidly growing anti-hunger organization. In addition, I have been honored to serve on the CHC's Board of Directors since 2006.

Even more important than any individual's experience though, are the networks being created through the CHC's Fellowship programs. I am regularly in contact with former Fellows working in Guinea with the UN World Food Program, in Eastern/Southern Africa with USAID, in Ethiopia with ACDI/VOCA, and in Louisville with the Kentucky Office for Refugees. These networks of information and support create a multiplier affect which is hard to quantify in terms of dollars. In other words, Emerson/Leland Fellows are greater than the sum of our parts in our impact on reducing hunger and poverty in the United States and internationally.

I would be happy to provide your office with more information on the Congressional Hunger Center. Please restore funding for these vital and effective programs.

Sincerely,

Ashley Aakesson
Executive Director
Children's Nutrition Program of Haiti
www.cnphaiti.org
aaakesson@cnphaiti.org
423-495-1122

March 14, 2007

Hon. Rosa DeLauro
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture
2362A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro:

The Food Research and Action Center supports the important work of the Congressional Hunger Center. We urge the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to include $3 million necessary for continuation of the Bill Emerson/Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowship Program at the Congressional Hunger Center. This funding is vital to the fellowship, a smartly designed program focused successfully on producing professional, highly effective young anti-hunger leaders. The Emerson/Leland hunger fellowship is unusual in the depth and quality of the training, oversight, and experiences offered to a diversity of students and young leaders. Indeed, FRAC has hired a number of former hunger fellows to fill key policy and field positions. In addition, many of the fellows have gone on after their fellowships to work to address hunger in allied organizations across the country, from a New York City anti-hunger organization to the Alaska Food Bank.

The Emerson/Leland hunger fellowship is a cost-effective program that yields significant benefits on many levels:

- Emerson/Leland hunger fellows have assisted FRAC's state and local anti-hunger partner organizations, which are often understaffed and underfunded, to increase the use of available federal food program benefits by low-income families and individuals.

- Emerson/Leland hunger fellows working in placements at other national organizations assist in the coordination of anti-hunger work among our national partners and their field networks.

- Emerson/Leland hunger fellows working with FRAC and DC Hunger Solutions (a project of FRAC), have enhanced our capacity to met key goals in helping hungry families and individuals to get the food they need with dignity.

Research on the Food Stamp Program by Emerson Fellows has helped: provide an early assessment of pilot programs to cut red tape for getting food stamps to poor elderly persons; establish a methodology for assessing local food stamp usage; and provide states and communities with ways to get nutrition resources to those hard hit by disasters. Indeed, the first edition of our Guide to the Disaster Food Stamp Program, which was written by an Emerson Fellow in July 2005, served as an important "how to" manual for states, communities, and non-profit groups in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

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Emerson/Leland hunger fellows' child nutrition and WIC programs work at FRAC has focused successfully on reaching practical goals to enhance the lives of low-income children and mothers by increasing access to healthy food through: child nutrition and WIC program outreach campaigns; research including comprehensive needs assessments, case studies, and surveys; publications celebrating the accomplishments and value of the programs; and Tool Kits giving community members, teachers, parents, school superintendents, child care advocates and providers the "how to" advice they need to bring school breakfast, summer food, afterschool programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program and WIC to low-income communities and to bring wellness to school meals.

In closing, the Food Research and Action Center urges you to include $3 million in critically needed funding to support the important work of the Congressional Hunger Center's Leland/Emerson Fellows Program. Please contact FRAC program directors Ellen Vollinger (202) 986-2200 extension 3016, evollinger@frac.org or Lynn Parker (202) 986-2200 extension 3012, lparker@frac.org if you need further information.

Sincerely,

James D. Weill

James D. Weill
President

March 14, 2007

Representative Rosa DeLauro, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration and Related Agencies
2362A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

Re: Support for Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program

Dear Representative DeLauro:

On behalf of the Land O'Lakes International Development Division I am writing to express our strong support for the Bill Emerson/Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowship Program, and request that it be funded at the level of $3 million in the FY08 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The Congressional Hunger Center has received federal funding since 1994 for its leadership training programs that combine hands-on field work and policy experience. Its strategic objective to "Fight hunger by building leaders" is an effective approach to the ever-present challenges of food aid issues.

Last year, Land O'Lakes International Development Division celebrated its 25th anniversary of delivering programs to improve food and agricultural systems around the world. Our development approach capitalizes on 85 years of Land O'Lakes, Inc. experience in creating and operating farm-to-market business systems. Land O'Lakes, Inc. is owned by and serves more than 300,000 producer-members and approximately 1,200 local cooperatives.

Having hosted a Mickey Leland International Fellow in our School Nutrition Programs in Bangladesh, Indonesia and in our Washington, DC office, the Land O'Lakes International Development Division benefited from the program through the quality and dedicated work of our fellow during the 2003-2005 program cycle. In addition, there has been lasting impact from this fellowship as these school nutrition programs continue to utilize the outcomes of the fellow's work and as the former fellow continues to contribute the expertise she gained through the program to our food security programs as a full-time employee.

Minnesota Headquarters Office 1080 W. County Road F, MS 5120, Shoreview, MN 55126; Phone (651) 494-5142
D.C. Office 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 901, Arlington, VA 22209; Phone (703) 524-1739

Representative Rosa DeLauro, Chair
Page 2
March 14, 2007

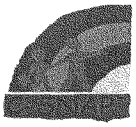
In 2003, Leland Hunger Fellow Chung Lai worked in Southeast Asia to support our School Nutrition Programs in Bangladesh and Indonesia. She conducted surveys and numerous household visits in these countries that provided valuable data and information for program advocacy and evaluation. Now as a full-time employee of our Title II/Institutional Capacity Building program, her expertise in research, monitoring, and evaluation is an asset allowing our programs to ensure appropriate targeting of beneficiaries, effective strategies to improve coping with food insecurity, and quality evaluations in our programs. The Congressional Hunger Center approved Land O'Lakes International Development's application to host another Fellow in the 2007-2009 program cycle. If funding permits, this Fellow will conduct research on pastoralists in eastern Africa who have been severely affected by drought and famine in recent years. The Fellows who participate in this leadership program are afforded the opportunity to tangibly contribute to the cause of fighting hunger while they themselves benefit from the learning and experience that they gain through this program.

I strongly urge you to provide a $3 million appropriation to the Emerson/Leland Hunger Fellowship Program and to support the vital work these talented Fellows provide to Land O'Lakes International Development and other development agencies.

Sincerely,

Tom Verdoorn
Vice President, International Development

Minnesota Headquarters Office: 1080 W. County Road F, MS 5120, Shoreview, MN 55126; Phone: (651) 494-5142
D.C. Office 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 901, Arlington, VA 22209, Phone (703) 524-1739



Addendum
Before the Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Cost savings associated with investing in children and nutrition programs

Addendum to the Formal Statement of Dr. Mariana Chilton, Principal Investigator, The Philadelphia GROW Project and Co-Principal Investigator of the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP) at Drexel University School of Public Health and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

C-SNAP-Philadelphia
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www.growproject.org

March 19, 2007

Addendum to Dr. Mariana Chilton's Testimony—March 13, 2007
Provided to The United States House of Representatives Agriculture Committee & the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry

Answer to the question following Dr. Chilton's testimony on research evidence on the health care cost savings associated with investing in children and nutrition programs.

The overwhelming majority of food insecure children live in households that are living at or below the poverty line. The economic repercussions of childhood poverty are estimated to cost the United States 4% of its gross domestic product (GDP) or approximately $500 billion a year.[1]

When considering the correlation between poverty and food insecurity and the impact on health, it is necessary to consider 1) the loss of quantity and quality of life due to early morbidity or mortality[2] and 2) additional health care expenditures.[3] It is estimated that childhood poverty of the estimated 600,000 children born into poverty in 2006, will result in a loss of 'health capitol' of $149 billion or 1.2% of the gross domestic product (GDP).[4] Health capitol refers to the total value of health projected at birth dependent upon income and poverty level.[5]

The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP) study has found that children in food insecure households are 90% more likely to be in fair or poor health; and 30% more likely to be hospitalized.[6] If we increased children's access to food stamps, this would likely decrease their rates of food insecurity, poor health, and cut hospitalization costs. The average cost of a pediatric hospitalization is $11,300.[7] This cost is equivalent to the average cost of several years' worth of food stamps for a family of four.[8] Clearly, the investment into food stamps can buffer children from poor health, and from hospitalizations. These are funds better spent on families in poverty over the course of several years, rather than funds spent on a singular hospitalization.

Recently, the US Department of Agriculture found that children on Medicaid who use food stamps from birth have lower health care costs associated with anemia and failure-to-thrive.[9]

The Federal Food Stamp Program reduced the child poverty gap by almost 20% in 2004 according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Department of Food and Nutrition Services.[10] The reduction in poverty through the use of food stamps helps developing children thrive and helps start to break the endemic cycle of poverty.

Other nutrition programs also act as a buffer against medical problems. For example, recent USDA cost benefit analyses found that The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) saves between $1.71 to $3.00 in direct and indirect medical costs for every dollar spent on WIC.[11]

Cost savings associated with investing in children and nutrition programs
Addendum to Dr. Mariana Chilton's Testimony

Food insecurity experienced by America's children has lasting ramifications that affect all aspects of a child's developmental trajectories. In their sample of over 23,000 infants and toddlers in their critical period of brain growth, the C-SNAP study finds that food insecurity is strongly associated with developmental delay.[12] Other research shows that children who are food insecure are more likely to have delayed cognitive abilities, behavioral issues, psychosocial dysfunction, and continuing poor health as the child matures into adulthood.[13] This has a detrimental affect on a child's school readiness.[14] Preschool children who are food insecure are more likely to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems.[15] Compared to school-aged children in food secure homes, children in food insecure homes are more likely to have seen a psychologist, have lower grades than higher income peers, and are reported to have greater difficulty interacting with their peers.[16]

This is so, even after controlling for other factors such as parent's education, child's medical history, and child birth weight, low-income families with children are at greater risk of developmental delays not just because of poverty but also due to food insecurity.[17] Food insecurity results in a loss of productivity, decreased academic performance, an increase in crime, and finally, an increase in the loss of health and loss of quality years of life.[18]

Such children who would perform poorly in school, and have behavioral problems may be more likely to drop out of school. High school drop-outs often earn less than high school graduates and are more likely to fall below the federal poverty line. Muennig (2001) found that health conditions and associative costs between high-school graduates and drop-outs are also dramatic. High school drop-outs are estimated to have higher rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other medical conditions that require an average of $35,000 a year in health care costs, compared to just $15,000 for students who completed high school.[19]

Public health, medical, and economic research have made tremendous strides within the past three decades to understand the complex nature of poverty, poor nutrition and health status. There is no one easy solution to the breaking the cycle of poverty. However, what we do know is that food stamps and other nutrition programs like WIC, act as a buffer, especially for small developing children from medical problems. Nutrition programs are an excellent national investment. They not only help to close the poverty gap, but they also facilitate the physical, cognitive, social, and cognitive development of children.

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Statement for the Record
On behalf of the
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Regarding the
Puerto Rico Nutrition Assistance Plan

Submitted to
Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry
Committee on Agriculture
US House of Representatives

Submitted by
Eduardo Bhatia
Executive Director
Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration

March 13, 2007

In 2007 the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) is scheduled to be reauthorized by Congress as part of the Farm Bill. This program was established by Congress in 1980 as a replacement for the Food Stamp program in Puerto Rico. As Congress reviews the NAP program I recommend consideration be given to establishing a "floor" on NAP authorization relative to the Food Stamp program so as to make NAP funding levels more responsive to changes in economic conditions.

The NAP provides nutrition assistance to 1 million of 1.7 million[1] Puerto Ricans who live under the US poverty level. Unlike the Food Stamp program that provides benefits to persons with incomes up to 130 percent of poverty, the NAP program eligibility ends at 50 percent of US poverty. The NAP benefit provides for a household per meal subsidy of $2.64 cents; Food Stamp households who live at 50 percent of poverty receive of subsidy of approximately $3.46 per meal.

Since 2000 the Food Stamp program participation has grown 49 percent, from 17.2 million to 25.7 million individuals[2], while the NAP program participation deceased from 1.082 million to 1.048 million individuals[3]. During this period, the Food Stamp program expenditure increased from $17.1 billion to $31.1 billion or

[1] State Plan Operations for the Administration of the Nutrition Assistance Program for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Fiscal Year 2006
[2] Food Stamp Participation and Costs(Data as of October 24, 2006) http://ww.fns.usda.gov/pd/fssummar.htm
[3] State Plan Operations for the Administration of the Nutrition Assistance Program for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Fiscal Year 2006

83 percent[4], and the NAP program authorization has increased 18 percent or about one quarter of the Food Stamp growth. In 2000 PAN expenditures equaled 7.44 percent of the Food Stamp program, but in 2005, it represented 4.8 percent, or a decline of 35 percent.

In 1999, Congress changed the NAP escalator so that the authorization level keeps pace with changes in the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). This critical change assured NAP funding levels would track inflationary increases in the Food Stamp program. However, current law does not provide adjustments to NAP related to the strength of the economy or changes in the Food Stamp program itself. The attached chart tracks growth in Food Stamp expenditures compared the Nutrition Assistance Program from 2000 to 2005 which illustrates 35 percent drop in NAP as compared to Food Stamp expenditures.

The "floor" that I am recommending Congress consider for the NAP program will make the authorization level more responsive to both economic and programmatic changes as well as inflation. I have attached a chart which demonstrates how the NAP program has grown at a substantially slower rate than the NAP for the period FY 2000 to FY 2005.

My proposal is to establish as a floor for NAP authorization, the percentage of NAP expenditures divided by food stamp expenditures for fiscal year 2005. By establishing a floor, the authorization of the NAP program will change as economic and programmed changes occur in the program.

The "floor" would only be activated in those years when the TFP adjustment does not track the overall change in the Food Stamp Program. There will be years in which the "floor" will have no impact on the NAP authorization level; however, the "floor" will act as a safeguard to prevent NAP from continuing to decline as a percentage of the Food Stamp expenditures as has occurred over the past several years.

The Commonwealth looks forward to working with the Committee in the reauthorization PAN program. As the Committee considers the inclusion of a floor for PAN, the staff of the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration is available to work with you to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for including my statement in the record of the Committee hearing.

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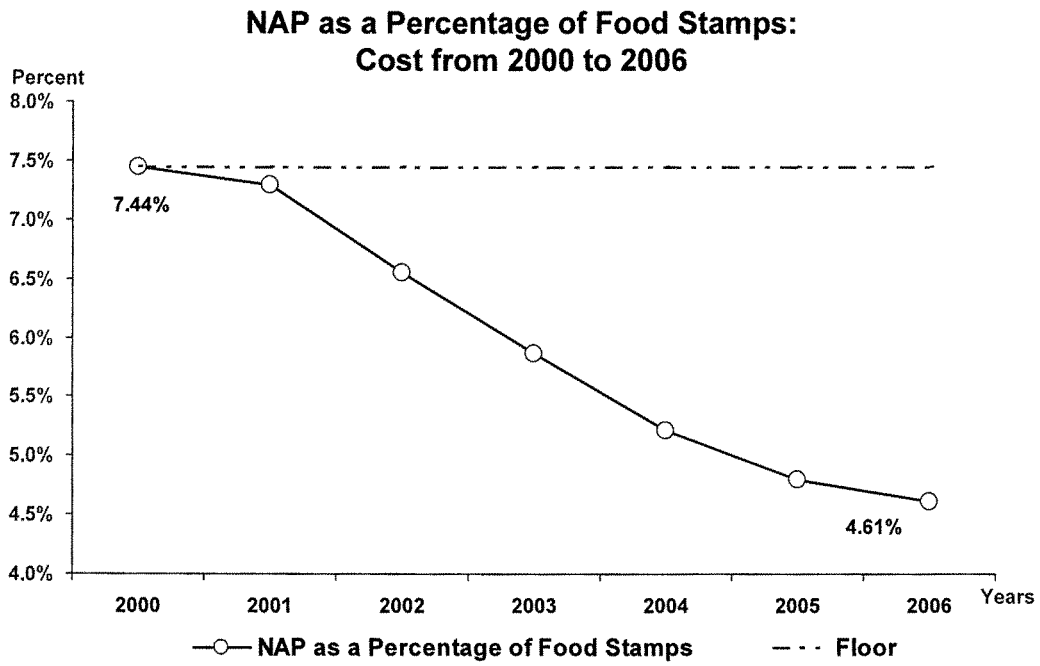
[4] Food Stamp Participation and Costs(Data as of October 24, 2006) http://ww.fns.usda.gov/pd/fssummar.htm

Comparison of Food Assistance Programs:

Food Stamps as Compared to PR Nutritional Assistance Program



Earl Gohl & Pavel DeJesus for **PRFAA**

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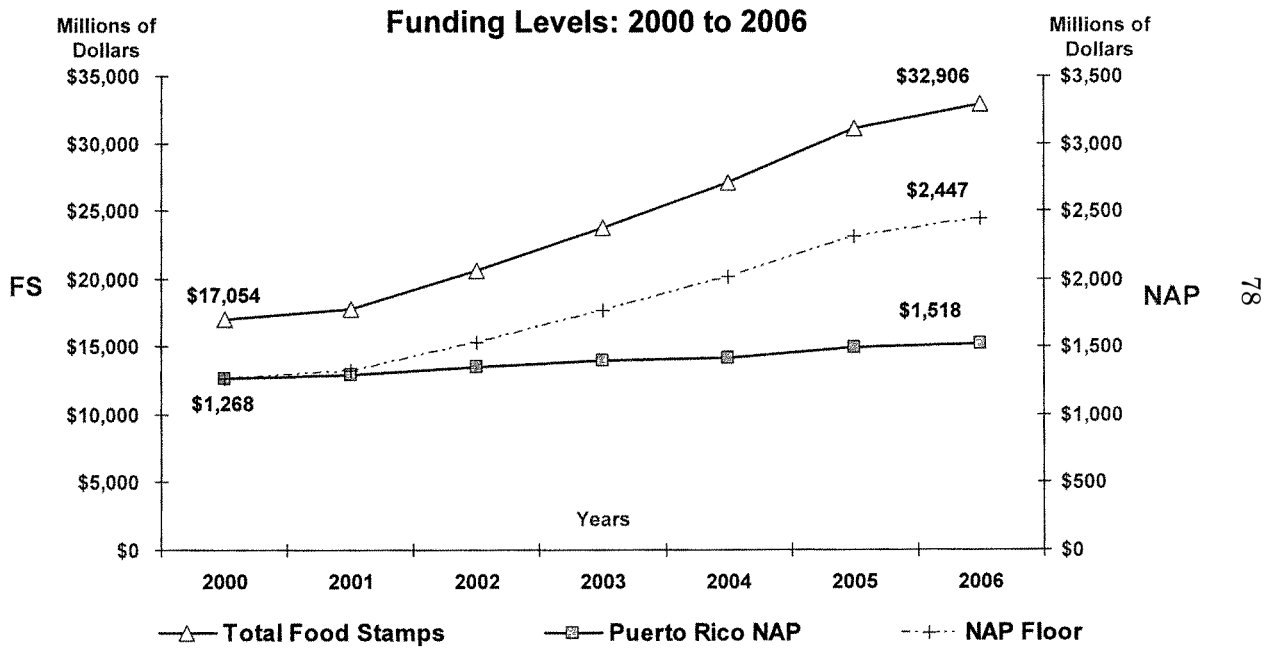

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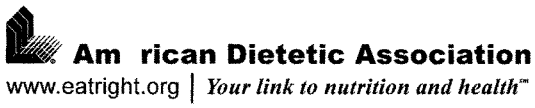

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The American Dietetic Association (ADA) commends the House Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry for holding this hearing on the food stamp program and its impact on children's health. ADA has a long history of involvement in food, food assistance, food safety and nutrition programs and our members provided written testimony at the regional farm bill hearings held last summer.

ADA is the largest organization of its kind and it is guided by a philosophy based on sound science and evidence-based practice. ADA members are sought-out participants in domestic and international discussions as they work on nearly every aspect of food, nutrition and health. As such, we are familiar with the importance of the Farm Bill on USDA food and nutrition resources.

The public needs an uncompromising commitment from their government to advance nutrition knowledge and to help people apply that knowledge to maintain and improve their health. Millions of Americans benefit from USDA food assistance programs, but we still see hunger in the United States. Co-existing with hunger is a national epidemic of overweight and obesity. In fact, overweight and obesity is the largest manifestation of malnutrition in the United States today. We also know that American children, who are a key recipient of USDA assistance programs, are overfed but undernourished. Studies show their physical stamina and activity have declined and their health literacy and knowledge is limited.

To address this sad commentary on the nutritional status of Americans, ADA recommends that the House address the following issues as part of Farm Bill reauthorization.

The USDA's food assistance programs must be available to those in need and be ad quately funded. Because what people eat matters, ADA recommends that food assistance programs cover and create incentives for purchases consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans.*

The Food Stamp Program is a key component of the federal food assistance programs and provides crucial support to needy households. Food stamps reach those most in need. Most food stamp participants are children, with half of all participants under 18.[1] Households with children receive about three-quarters of all food stamp benefits. In addition, many food stamp participants are elderly or disabled.

ADA supports many of the key tenets articulated by the anti-hunger community: increasing the minimum benefit and allotments; providing broader access; simplifying application and reporting; matching state administrative reimbursements; providing greater funding for outreach and education; improving the environment for people to purchase food including more fruits and

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[1] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. *Characteristics of Food Stamps Households: Fiscal Year 2004,* FSP-05-CHAR, by Anni Poikolainen. Project Officer, Kate Fink. Alexandria, VA; 2005.

vegetables; and urging that the public invest in ways to make real progress to eradicate hunger and food insecurity in the United States.

To improve nutrition outcomes for people who are beneficiaries of food assistance, program changes and environmental supports can guide beneficiaries to dietary choices that can make, and keep, them healthier.
The purpose of the food stamp program is to "...promote the general welfare and to safeguard the health and well being of the Nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income persons."[2]

Unfortunately, research is not conclusive that the program is raising the levels of nutrition among low-income persons. While there is general consensus that the program increases household food expenditures, that does not guarantee an improvement in nutrient intake or diet quality. Research suggests that the program increases calorie and protein intake, but the evidence is too weak to conclude that the program increases availability of a number of vitamins and minerals.[3]

The nutritional impact of the food stamp program may be strengthened by helping beneficiaries use foods stamps to purchase diets consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans.* Today's technologies make it possible to reward healthful food options and reinforce nutrition education and information messages. ADA is mindful that our larger environment often works against the consumer choosing optimally for health and well-being. ADA supports a policy preserving choice, while raising nutritional standards and outcomes.

Investment in food stamp program nutrition education is necessary and it must be sustained. If we expect consumers to take personal responsibility for making healthy choices, then we have a responsibility to make sure that they are adequately prepared. The government must invest in the nutrition research and nutrition education necessary to give Americans the knowledge and ability to make their own nutrition decisions.

Labels and pamphlets alone do not lead to behavior change. People have to be taught, and their educational experience needs reinforcement. Nutrition education that works is a worthwhile return on investment. Economic Research Service scientists have studied the connection between nutrition knowledge and food choices with Americans.[4] They have learned that in socio-economically matched individuals, a 1-point improvement on a nutrition knowledge scale correlates to a 7-percent improvement in diet quality. In matched households, an improvement in the primary meal preparer's knowledge translates to a 19-percent improvement in household meal quality. Clearly, nutrition education is one key to nutrition health.

Our experience has shown that registered dietitians are uniquely educated and trained to help people learn and incorporate healthful habits into their lives. ADA works continuously to make it possible for more Americans to have access to dietetic services through private sector and public program coverage.

Nutrition research is vital for the Food Stamp Program and for all nutrition programs. While we commend the Subcommittee for holding today's hearing on the role of the food assistance programs, we must not forget about another key component authorized by the farm bill – that of nutrition research. Nutrition recommendations and programs for the public must be

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[2] Title 7, Section 271.1 (a)
[3] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Health. FANRR-19-4.
[4] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. *USDA's Healthy Eating Index and Nutrition Information.* Technical Bulletin No. 1866, by Jayachandran N.Variyam, James Blaylock, David Smallwood, Peter Basiotis. Alexandria, VA; 1998.

based on sound science. Only the federal government has the public mandate and resources to carry out research on human nutrition needs and to develop dietary guidance that forms the basis for all federal nutrition programs. In particular, the work done at the Agricultural Research Services' Human Nutrition Research Centers has been the cornerstone of dietary recommendations.

It has been more than a decade since Congress has made a comprehensive review of the nation's nutrition policies and programs. Many members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees' newer members have never been briefed on USDA's role, designated in the 1977 farm bill, as the lead agency for federal human nutrition research. Discussions regarding USDA and nutrition typically focus on food assistance programs, but do not address the key underlying work being conducted by USDA researchers throughout the United States that forms the basis for the Federal nutrition information and education efforts affecting every American.

Clearly, there is significant potential benefit in addressing food, nutrition and health issues now, before circumstances deteriorate, and to ameliorate human as well as economic costs. There will be market needs for healthful products and services that can help the public become more involved with their health and health care management. But there are roles that currently are not being effectively addressed and may rightfully need to be addressed by public policy.

We encourage the House Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry to build on their commitment to the food assistance programs and discuss with their colleagues on the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research the importance of USDA-funded nutrition research to the food assistance programs. USDA's Human Nutrition Program conducts high quality research that helps to define the role of food and its components in optimizing health throughout the life cycle for all Americans. Strengthening the connection between research and the food stamp program would be of service to all interested in the health of our nation.

For more information, or if you have questions, please contact:
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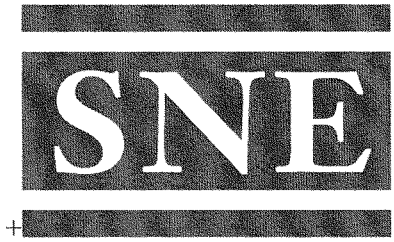

Testimony

on

The Review of the Federal Food Stamp Program and its Impact on Children's Health

Submitted
for the
House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry's
Hearing Record
by
The Society for Nutrition Education

March 26, 2007

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The Society for Nutrition Education (SNE) is pleased to submit the following statement for the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry's hearing record on the Review of the Federal Food Stamp Program and its Impact on Children's Health. As the Subcommittee begins work on critical issues in the 110th Congress, you and your colleagues have the opportunity to protect and enhance the vitality of citizens by supporting initiatives to educate Americans on living healthful lives. SNE urges you to support public policies that promote effective nutrition education in an environment where this education can lead to health for all.

SNE believes the food and nutrition assistance programs, such as the Food Stamp Program (FSP), are a front line defense in preventing hunger and food insecurity among children.

As Congress reauthorizes the Farm Bill in 2007, SNE urges you to support a strong Nutrition title that reauthorizes and improves the Food Stamp Program and the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNE).

SNE's recommendations and Congress's actions with the Farm Bill are made in the context of a United States where lifestyle-related diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, cancer and hypertension cost the economy over $117 billion annually, causing an ever increasing burden on tax payers and private industry. Nutrition education is critical to lowering risks for these diseases and saving our economy these escalating costs.

The U.S. food supply is rife with nutrient-poor, inexpensive food choices while nutrient-rich choices, such as fresh fruits and vegetables are expensive, especially for low income individuals. At the same time, local producers have difficulty competing for market share in the current industrialized food system. Further, our agricultural production, and thus our food supply, is out of balance with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. According to a recent report by the USDA Economic Research Service, "For Americans to meet the fruit, vegetable, and whole grain recommendations, domestic crop acreage needs to increase by an estimated 7.4 million harvested acres." Current agricultural subsidies favor a select and narrow set of commodities being grown that predominantly support large scale livestock operations and a highly processed food diet while not supporting fruit and vegetable production.

Lastly, in this context, hunger and food insecurity continue at unacceptable levels for a country with our wealth. Too many people in our community are living with hunger or on the edge of hunger. National surveys document that more than 38 million Americans live in households that experience food insecurity.

These issues are of great concern to SNE as an international organization of nutrition education professionals who conduct research in education, behavior, and communication; develop and disseminate innovative nutrition education strategies; and communicate information on food, nutrition, and health issues to students, professionals, policy makers, and the public. SNE is prepared to work with you and the members of the Subcommittee to address health issues through public policies that support effective nutrition education in a health- promoting environment.

SNE urges Subcommittee members to craft a 2007 Farm Bill and FY 2008 budget which invests resources to make the U.S. food and agriculture system better able to advance public health, provide food and nutrition education for low income families, protect the environment and strengthen community-based food systems.

SNE's 2007 priority areas as they relate to the Food Stamp Program and related programs affecting children's health include:

Food Security

The Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program is a crucial and effective investment in meeting the urgent needs children. It has reduced the terrible consequences of malnutrition and has helped prevent the problem of hunger from becoming worse in our communities. More than 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to families with children, allowing their parents to obtain food at grocery stores for meals at home. Through the nationwide use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, program utilization has been streamlined for transactions for consumers and store clerks, and EBT has quantifiably reduced the chances of program abuse.

Food Stamps pay dividends for low-income consumers, food producers and manufacturers, grocery retailers and communities. As food stamp purchases flow through grocery checkout lines, farmers' markets and other outlets, those benefits generate almost double their value in economic activity, especially for many hard-pressed rural and urban communities desperately in need of stimulus to business and jobs.

The Food Stamp Program's basic entitlement structure must be maintained while greater resources are provided to the educational components of the program and provisions that fight hunger in our communities. There are several key areas for program investment:

- Improve adequacy of benefits. Neither the average food stamp benefit level of $1 per person per meal, nor the $10 per household monthly minimum benefit is sufficient to help program participants purchase an adequate diet. With limited funds to buy healthy food, people rely on cheaper foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt and low in essential vitamins, minerals and fiber. This has contributed to obesity and poor nutrition and has a negative impact on health.

- Improve access to health promoting foods in low income neighborhoods by supporting innovative community food security programs that focus on local foods and by expanding support of FSP Electronic Benefit Transfer capabilities at Farmer's Markets.

- Improve access to food and nutrition education through Food Stamp Nutrition Education.

- Allow Food Stamp Nutrition Education to assist community food security projects and better utilize social marketing strategies to impact nutrition behaviors from a community perspective.

- Encourage FSNE programs to meet the nutrition education needs of older adults as a priority area of the Program.

- Expand access to the Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program reaches on average only 50% of the estimated eligible population and only 30% of older adults estimated eligible for the program. And hundreds of thousands more are just above eligibility cut off points. People in need of food but excluded from the FSP include working poor families and older adults with savings slightly above decades-old and outdated resource limits, many legal immigrants, and numerous indigent jobless people seeking employment. These populations are in need of more streamlined access to the program and its benefits.

- Continue program simplification and streamlining for caseworkers and clients. While food stamp outreach and nutrition education are achieving important advances, these efforts need more resources, and enrollments are hampered by shortfalls in state technology and supports. Too many eligible people—especially working poor and older adults—are missing out on benefits.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides food to pregnant women, children and older adults. SNE supports the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. Specifically:

- Change income eligibility to 185% poverty for all participants

- Expand CSFP to all states.

School Food

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

In addition to the Food Stamp Program, schools are a critical venue for providing and encouraging healthy diets for children. Federal initiatives included the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program which has been a success in the states where it is being used by 25 schools. It is getting fruits and vegetables into the diets of children of all income groups, but especially those that come from low income families. Unfortunately this success is reaching only a very small percentage of America's children who have a dreadfully low intake of fruits and vegetables and would benefit greatly from this program. SNE recommends:

- Expansion of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program to all 50 states.

- Use of incentives for schools to purchase locally and regionally produced fruits and vegetables in the program.

While school food is not generally the purview of the Farm Bill or of the Food Stamp Program, we want to take this opportunity to remind the Subcommittee that the Farm Bill indirectly affects children and schools through the commodity program and other related programs. SNE is concerned that children often encounter nutritionally poor food and beverage choices in their schools at the same time schools are educating about health through good nutrition in the classrooms. This gives the message that good nutrition is a theory, but not important in the real world. SNE supports policies that promote a health-promoting food environment along with nutrition education in all schools. Specifically, SNE recommends:

- Limiting foods of poor nutritional value in schools which compete with school food.

- Expanding funding for food and nutrition education in schools.

The Society for Nutrition Education is committed to working with the Subcommittee to address the nutrition-related challenges facing our country. We look forward to your support during the year in advancing public policies that promote effective nutrition education in an environment where this education can save our nation money and lead to better health for all.

We appreciate your consideration of our views. If you have any questions about our positions, please contact Mary Ann Passi, SNE Executive Director at 317-328-4627.

TESTIMONY OF NANCY MONTANEZ-JOHNER

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Nancy Montanez-Johner, Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

I am pleased to be at today's hearing to discuss the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and its impact on children's nutrition and health. The FSP is the Nation's primary nutrition assistance program, increasing food purchasing power for households with little income and few resources by providing benefits that are redeemed at retail grocery stores across the country. Over 26 million low-income people make use of the program to help put food on the table.

This program provides substantial benefits to low-income families with children, helping them to stretch their buying power. About half of all food stamp recipients are children, nearly 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to households with children, and over 80 percent of all children who are eligible for benefits receive them. On average, households with children receive about $300 in food stamp benefits each month, with the amount varying based on the size and income level of the household. Food stamp households also benefit from nutrition education that is part of the program in every State—helping to promote thrifty shopping and healthy eating among food stamp clients.

The evidence is clear that the FSP makes an important difference in the lives of low-income children and families, and the others that it serves. With its nationwide standards for eligibility and benefits, it represents a national nutrition safety net for low-income families and individuals wherever they live. It is designed to expand automatically to respond to increased need when the economy is in recession and contracts when the economy is growing, making sure that food gets to people who need it, when they need it.

Perhaps most importantly for today's hearing, the FSP makes more food available to households that participate. Food stamp families are able to spend more on food than they would be able to without the program, and providing benefits that can be spent only on food increases total food expenditures more than providing an equal amount of cash would. In addition, there is evidence that program participation can increase the availability of nutritious food in the home.[1]

To sum up, Mr. Chairman—the Food Stamp Program works, and it works for children. That's why we're committed to ensuring effective program operations for all eligible people who wish to participate.

To meet that commitment, we have implemented outreach activities such as the national media campaign. The number one reason that people do not apply for food stamp benefits is because they do not realize that they are eligible. The national media campaign seeks to raise awareness of the nutrition benefits of food stamps and encourage low income people to seek out more information about their eligibility for this important benefit. National media campaign activities primarily consist of radio advertising in areas of low participation.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) also provides outreach materials for the Food Stamp Program including posters and flyers, as well as radio and television public service announcements, that State and local food stamp agencies and community and faith-based outreach providers can use in their local outreach efforts.

For the last four years, FNS has also awarded grants to community and faith-based organizations to implement and study promising outreach strategies. All of these outreach strategies are geared towards the working poor, including families with children, seniors, and legal immigrants, including citizen children of undocumented parents.

Mr. Chairman, I know the focus of this hearing is how the FSP affects children's health, but I would be remiss if I did not mention the other major programs that I oversee which directly bear on this subject. The 15 domestic nutrition assistance programs administered by FNS work together to improve food security, fight hunger, and support healthy eating for low-income people across the Nation. The President's budget for Fiscal Year 2008 demonstrates the Administration's unwavering commitment to this mission by requesting a record level of $59 billion dollars for these vital programs, which serve one in five Americans over the course of a year. While these programs are designed to meet the needs of people of all ages who need

[1] Research evidence summarized by Fraker (1990) and Fox, Hamilton, and Lin (2004) indicates that an additional dollar of food stamp benefits raises food expenditures by 17 to 47 cents; an additional dollar of cash, in contrast, raises food expenditures by 5 to 10 cents. Both summaries also report evidence that the FSP increases household availability of food energy and protein. Devaney and Moffitt (1991) report that FSP participation significantly increased household availability of a broad array of vitamins and minerals: vitamins A, B6, C, riboflavin, thiamin, calcium, iron, magnesium, and phosphorus. nutritious food to children in summer camps and other settings in the summer months, when school is not in session.

assistance, they focus most strongly on the needs of children. In addition to food stamps, the major nutrition assistance programs include:

• The Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), including the school meals (lunch and breakfast) program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which support nutritious meals and snacks served to over 30 million children in schools, child care institutions, and after-school care programs. In addition, the Summer Food Service (SFSP) Program and parts of the National School Lunch Program provide nutritious food to children in summer camps and other settings in the summer months, when school is not in session.

• And for the youngest children and infants, we operate the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC. WIC addresses the special needs of at-risk, low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to five years of age. It provides 8 million participants monthly with supplemental food packages targeted to their dietary needs, nutrition education, and referrals to a range of health and social services; benefits that promote a healthy pregnancy for mothers and a healthy start for their children.

Overweight and obesity are critical issues for every part of our population, and addressing those problems is most important early in life, when eating and other health-related behaviors are developed. The policies that shape the programs are aligned with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which are revised every five years to ensure that policy is based on current scientific and medical knowledge. And each major program promotes healthy eating and active lifestyles through nutrition education and promotion.

Nutrition education and services are provided to WIC participants in conjunction with other parts of the WIC benefit to improve birth outcomes and promote childhood immunization, and breastfeeding. Team Nutrition, a comprehensive, integrated plan to promote good nutrition through the Child Nutrition Programs, includes nutrition education materials for use in schools and technical assistance for food service providers. We also promote nutrition education across programs through the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Campaign, and by working with State agencies that operate the programs on State Nutrition Action Plans, to foster integrated cross-program strategies.

Nutrition education efforts are not limited to the Child Nutrition Programs but are also provided by States to food stamp recipients. The program represents a prime opportunity to reach low-income children and families and encourage healthy practices that can last a lifetime.

The FSP clearly has been a major benefit to low-income households with children over the years. Children in the FSP have also benefited from the increased commitment to nutrition education as a component part of the Program. Considered an optional benefit on the part of States, spending in the area of nutrition education has increased over the last fifteen years. For example, in FY 1992, FNS approved $661,000 for Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) efforts conducted by seven State agencies. This year, FNS approved $275 million in federal funds for fifty-two State agencies to provide FSNE. It is important to note that FSNE plays a valuable role in helping to communicate the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to low-income audiences. This includes promotion of MyPyramid and its various iterations such as MyPyramid for Children and MiPiramide.

To that end, FNS has also developed a series of nutrition education and promotional materials targeting women with children entitled Loving Your Family, Feeding Their Future: Nutrition Education through the Food Stamp Program. These materials are designed for Food Stamp mothers who may possess low-literate skills and who may be Spanish speakers. These materials can be used in any setting with similar target audiences, such as the WIC Program. The anticipated release date of these materials is May 2007.

The Food Stamp Nutrition Connection is a website designed to provide training and information resources to FSP nutrition educators, and it provides more than 150 nutrition education resources for children.

For a preview of our excellent children resource materials please visit our web sites at: *http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov, http://www.fns.usda.gov/eafsmartplavhardkids/Library/actsheets.htm* (For children in Spanish and English)

I would like to take a moment to outline several of our Farm Bill Proposals, especially those that would benefit households with children.

We are using the 2007 Farm Bill process to further improve program access and facilitate future self-sufficiency. The Administration's reform-minded and fiscally responsible proposals build on the success of the 2002 Farm Bill—raising food stamp participation rates among eligible populations, restoring eligibility for many legal immigrants, and providing new flexibility for States to tailor services to better serve their clients—with improvements in access, strong integrity, and careful steward-

ship of the taxpayer dollars. Let me outline some of the proposals that have particularly important impacts on families with children:

First, we want to strengthen efforts to integrate nutrition education into the Food Stamp M Program by recognizing in the Food Stamp Act of 1977 that nutrition education is a component of the program and investing $100 million to establish a five-year competitive grants demonstration program targeted at developing and testing solutions to the rising rates of obesity. These grants will allow us to evaluate creative and innovative solutions in this complex area, such as point-of-sale incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables, increased access among food stamp recipients to farmers markets, and integrated initiatives that use multiple communication channels to reinforce key messages. These initiatives would include rigorous evaluations to identify effective strategies. This is important, as the Committee knows, because of the serious health threats of obesity and overweight threaten American citizens, but is even more critical when we consider the impact it has on our nation's children.

Second, our proposals to increase program access that would affect families with children include:

• Eliminating the cap on the dependent care deduction—Current policy supports work or participation in work services by providing for limited deductions from the family's gross income associated with the cost of dependent care when determining food stamp eligibility and benefit amount: a cap of $200 per month for children under 2 and $175 for other dependent children is the current policy. The cap was set back in 1993. It is time to eliminate the cap, which would simplify State administration and help working families with children.

• Excluding the value of college savings plans from the resource limit—This proposal would expand the plans eligible for exclusion from the resource limit when determining food stamp eligibility and would simplify administration for the States. Most significantly, it supports working poor, encourages focused savings for children's futures, and recognizes that households should not have to deplete college savings plans in order to get nutrition assistance. This proposal will exclude from the resource calculation the value of certain college savings plans that the IRS recognizes for tax purposes, including 529 plans operated by most States.

• Excluding combat-related military pay—Enhanced pay from military deployment can sometimes cause families receiving food stamps to no longer be eligible for this assistance. This policy change would ensure that military families are not penalized for doing their patriotic duty. It supports the families of servicemen and servicewomen fighting overseas by ensuring that their families back home do not lose food stamps as a result of the additional deployment income. This proposal has been a part of the President's budget for sever years and was first enacted in the 2005 Appropriations Act; this farm bill proposal would make this annual policy fix permanent.

• Encouraging savings for retirement—This proposal simplifies food stamp resource policy and makes it more equitable because under current law some retirement accounts are excluded and some are included. This proposal supports the President's Ownership Society Initiative, by increasing the ability of low-income people to save for retirement. It is expected, when fully implemented, to add approximately 100,000 persons to the program land to increase benefits by $592 million over 5 years. The majority of the new participants will be workers and their families, most with children, but also improves access for the elderly.

Third, beyond the $100 million in obesity-prevention grants, we also propose to improve nutrition for children by:

• Adding new mandatory funding for the purchase of additional fruits and vegetables for use in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. This $500 million of funding over 10 years represents a net increase in the total purchase of fruits and vegetables for school meals over levels available under any other authorities.

• Increasing Section 32 spending on fruits and vegetables by $2.75 billion over 10 years. This proposal will increase the availability of fruits and vegetables to low income individuals and school children participating in nutrition assistance programs, and the consumption of these healthful foods can contribute to the improved health of program participants.

Mr. Chairman, Food Stamps and the other USDA programs help us lead the fight against hunger, and the level of commitment to this task remains high. But we still know that there is more to do. We are continuing to improve program operations, get benefits to those who are already eligible, but do not participate, and keep our eye on program integrity in the process.

FNS programs enable other programs to operate better by making sure that young children have access to proper nutrition and are ready to learn.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES D. WEILL

Chairman Baca and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

I am Jim Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center ("FRAC"). The Food Research and Action Center has been working for 37 years to reduce and eventually end hunger in this country. Through research, policy advocacy, outreach, public education, and training and technical assistance for state and local advocates, public agencies, officials and providers, we seek to strengthen public nutrition programs and have them reach many more people in need.

FRAC has been instrumental in helping to launch, improve and expand the food stamp, WIC, school breakfast, summer food and other nutrition programs.

Today's topic is extremely important. The Food Stamp Program is a very strong and successful program—the nation's most important bulwark against hunger. The program is essential to the basic well-being of millions of Americans, including the nutrition and health of children, but needs to be strengthened further. My testimony will discuss: first the reasons that the program is so successful; then its important positive impact on children's nutrition and health; and third, key ways in which it needs to be improved.

Even as the economy has grown year after year, lower-income Americans have received a shrinking share of the economic pie, losing out both relatively (compared to high-income groups) and absolutely (compared to the cost of living). Incomes typically have lagged growing health, housing and energy costs. Poverty, food insecurity, and similar problems caused by inadequate wages and economic supports generally have increased. The number of people living in poverty rose from 31.6 million in 2000 to 37 million in 2005. The number of people living in households facing food insecurity—the government phrase for families without the resources to feed themselves enough, or unable for economic reasons to purchase a healthy diet, or otherwise struggling with hunger—rose from 31 million in 1999 to 38.2 million in 2004, and then fell to 35.1 million in 2005, still well above 1999 levels (2006 data are not yet available). More than 12 million children live in food insecure households.

There are many heartbreaking stories those of us on this panel could tell about individuals and families struggling against hunger, stories whose poignancy merely grows when we think of our nation's extraordinary abundance. The one I keep coming back to in my mind involves a mother standing on a seemingly endless line of 896 people waiting outside a food bank in rural southeastern Ohio, as reported by the TV show 60 Minutes a couple of years ago. She explained to the reporter that she bought whole milk and cut it with an equal part of water: "It makes milk last longer. Because the baby. . .needs milk." When asked what her dream in life was, this rural Ohio mother in our rich twenty-first century America said that it was to feed her baby undiluted milk.

A stronger Food Stamp Program could fulfill that dream. We should not have to explain to this mother and millions like her that, even as the economy grows, the needed program improvements can't happen and, indeed, food stamp benefits will continue to be reduced further each year because of a law Congress passed in 1996.

As a nation, we can do better.

I. FOOD STAMPS AND LOW-INCOME AMERICANS.

The Food Stamp Program is the government's first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity, and a key factor in bolstering family economic success, ameliorating poverty and improving nutrition and health.

For many low-income people, food stamps are the critical lifeline—a source of basic income as fundamentally important as Social Security is to seniors. Indeed, In the 1980s then-Senator Robert Dole described the program as the most important advance in America's social programs since the creation of Social Security. Food stamp benefits lift the incomes of 2.2 million Americans/year above the poverty line. Food stamp benefits are the single most effective program in lifting children out of extreme poverty (defined as family income below 50 percent of the poverty line). Families with earnings from low-wage work are heavily reliant on food stamps. For example, at the earnings level of a family of four with one full-time minimum wage worker, food stamp benefits are about $5,000 and the Earned Income Tax Credit is $4,100. As cash welfare eligibility has shrunk and more and more people have entered the workforce, but at low wages, moreover, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of food stamp households with work income, as opposed to welfare.

The program has a range of other policy and political strengths that have been key to its growing success over the years:

• An initiative that began with bipartisan support in the 1960s and 1970s, with early champions like Senators Robert Dole and George McGovern and then Representatives Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland, has continued to receive an extraordinary level of support from members of both parties. There also is considerable state and local official support, again from officeholders in both parties.

• President Bush's Department of Agriculture has been a positive force since 2001 in increasing the access of eligible people to the program. President Bush's support in 2002 of eligibility for legal immigrants and better access for working families was an important factor in the steps forward made that year.

• Polls show that Americans care deeply about eliminating hunger in this country, feel that not enough is being done in that regard, and want greater government efforts.

• The continuing entitlement nature of the program has made it flexible and responsive to changes in economic conditions (whether local or national) and to emegencies. The Food Stamp Program stood out among federal programs after Katrina for its very fast and effective response to the needs of hundreds of thousands of families on the Gulf Coast.

• The replacement of food stamp coupons by electronic benefits cards and other initiatives have reduced errors and fraud (more than 98 percent of benefits go to eligible households), and made the use of program benefits at the checkout lane much less visible, thereby reducing the stigma of participation.

• In a time of growing insecurity and growing economic volatility for low-income families—more changes in employment and wages—the entitlement nature of food stamps, the national benefit structure (with benefit amounts inversely scaled to family income in a way essentially uniform across the nation), and the very few "categorical" restrictions on eligibility all contribute to the program's responsiveness to need.

• The program has support from disparate sectors, including the agricultural sector, food companies, and grocery retailers; labor; and the religious community.

• The program supports many low-income working families (including those leaving welfare), children and seniors, as well as disabled and unemployed persons. There also are more than 600,000 veterans in households receiving food stamps.

• Food stamps reach millions of people from all parts of our society—e.g., Whites, African-Americans and Hispanics; rural, suburban and urban households. I know that some think of farm programs as the "rural part" of the Farm Bill and food stamps as the "urban part." That doesn't fully reflect the reality, which is better portrayed in a report from the Casey Institute at the University of New Hampshire entitled "Rural America Depends on the Food Stamp Program to Make Ends Meet." The Casey Institute found that 22 percent of the nation's population lived in nonmetropolitan areas in 2001, but 31 percent of food stamp beneficiaries lived there.

Perhaps the clearest recent summary of the success of food stamps and the results of the considerable strengthening of the program came in a January issue of *The National Journal* devoted to "10 Successes [and] 10 Challenges" in American society—major issues in the public and private sectors. Alongside cleaner air, successful assimilation of immigrants, American entrepreneurship, and six other successes was food stamps, described as "A Government Reform That Worked." *The National Journal* was particularly struck by the extremely low rates of program fraud, and the quick and effective response of the program on the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in 2005. I have attached the article to this testimony.

II. FOOD STAMPS AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Sometimes we take for granted the general good health and nutrition of our nation's children, and forget that it is our nutrition programs that have made a huge difference for millions of them. I would like to begin this part of my testimony by pointing out that 2007 marks the 40th anniversary of a ground-breaking Congressional hearing on hunger in America, and its health and nutrition consequences for children. At that hearing, physicians shocked Congress and the nation with their descriptions of the state of nutrition and health among children in poor areas of Appalachia and the southeastern United States. Dr. Raymond Wheeler, a physician from North Carolina, testified on behalf of the Physicians Task Force on Hunger: "Wherever we went and wherever we looked we saw children in significant numbers who were hungry and sick, children for whom hunger is a daily fact of life, and sickness in many forms, inevitability. The children we saw were more than just malnourished. They were hungry, weak, and apathetic. Their lives were being shortened. They are visibly and predictably losing their health, their energy and their

spirits. They are suffering from hunger and disease, and directly or indirectly, they are dying from them, which is exactly what starvation means."

Beginning that day, many more Americans came to understand the importance of ending hunger and improving nutrition to ensure the health and educational achievement of our children. Federal nutrition programs have been created and expanded to ensure that the desperate situation Dr. Wheeler described would never again happen in our nation. By the late 1970s studies found hunger had been dramatically reduced by food stamps and other government initiatives like WIC and school meals. But we have in essence stalled, and in some respects slid backward since then.

We need to reinvigorate our nation's anti-hunger effort.

All of us recognize the importance of a healthful and sufficient diet for children, from the molecular biologist studying nutrition at the cellular level to the mothers and fathers among us who see it each day in our children's growth and development. But one difference today is that we are seeing and hearing more and more findings from laboratory research, epidemiological studies, and nutrition interventions that contribute to our growing understanding of the vital importance of enough good food for the next generation—for their health and cognitive, physical, emotional and social development—and the role of food stamps in accomplishing that. Food security, which the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines as "access by all people [in the household] at all times to enough food for an active healthy life," translates, for children, into optimal cognitive development and better education outcomes, improved mental health and self-esteem, better family dynamics, healthier children with healthier futures, and obesity prevention. Everyday the Food Stamp Program works to make sure that millions of low-income children enjoy these positive outcomes. And, with additional funding and targeted changes in the program, it can make even more of a difference for these and other children and their families.

Food stamps increase the nutrition available to low-income children. Over half of food stamp recipients are children, making it nearly as much of a child nutrition program as School Lunch and Breakfast. Food stamps increase household food spending, and research on the effects of food stamps on overall household food consumption reveals that basic nutrients in home food supplies are increased substantially (20 to 40 percent) by food stamps. USDA reports that the very large majority of benefits are spent on basic food items—for example, vegetables, fruits, grain products, meat and meat alternatives account for nearly three quarters of the money value of food used by food stamp recipients.

One study by USDA researchers using national food consumption data looked at the impact of the Food Stamp Program on households' Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores (an indicator of overall dietary quality developed by USDA based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans) and found that the value of food stamps received by a household had a substantial and statistically significant positive effect on overall dietary quality. *For each dollar of food stamps that a household received, the household HEI score went up—the higher the level of food stamps, the larger the positive nutritional effect.*

Another group of researchers looked specifically at the effects of household food stamp participation on the nutrient intakes of children 1 to 4 years old, using the same national food consumption data. They found that for iron, vitamin A, thiamin, niacin and zinc, the Food Stamp Program had a significant positive effect on the intakes of this age group. Again, the intakes of these nutrients were significantly related to the amount of food stamps received—as benefits went up, the amount of each nutrient in the diet went up as well.

Another recent study demonstrated that, among 8000 children followed from kindergarten to third grade, those whose families began to receive food stamps achieved significantly greater improvement in reading and math than those whose families stopped receiving food stamps.

In short, the evidence is that food stamps make a positive difference for nutrition, and the consumption of a nutritionally adequate and healthful diet contributes to better health and educational outcomes for children.

Food stamps increase the food available to low-income children and their families and thus move families closer to food security, and further away from the adverse consequences of food insecurity. As indicated earlier, more than 12 million children in the U.S. live in food insecure households—16.9 percent of children live in food insecure households, compared to 10.4 percent of adults.

Researchers are finding that when children live in food insecure households, their health status can be impaired, making them less able to resist illness and more likely to become sick or hospitalized. Iron deficiency anemia among young children has also been associated with household food insecurity. Children from food insecure

households have problems with learning, resulting in lower grades and test scores. They are also more likely to be anxious and irritable in the classroom, and more likely to be tardy, or absent from school. Adolescents from food insecure households have been shown to be more likely to have psychological problems.

According to a survey of several thousand mothers of 3-year-old children in 18 large cities, mental health problems in mothers and behavioral problems in their preschool-aged children were twice as likely in food insecure households as in food secure households. In discussing their findings, the researchers assert: "Social policy can address food insecurity more directly than it can address many other early-life stresses, and doing so can enhance the well-being of mothers and children." The Food Stamp Program is one of the social policies that can bring families with children more food security.

Put differently, in the metaphor used by Dr. Deborah Frank of Boston Medical Center and the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, food stamps are like a childhood vaccine against malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity—a miracle drug that cuts babies' chances of dying, reduces hospitalizations, and increases children's school achievement. But because benefits are inadequate, we are giving children (in Dr. Frank's words) a "sub-therapeutic" dose of this miracle drug—enough to make them better, but less than science tells us they need, the equivalent of giving children penicillin that isn't quite enough to really cure a strep throat. And we are giving this miracle drug only to 60 percent of the people who need it. If this nation were giving polio or measles vaccine to only 60 percent of children, and in sub-therapeutic doses, I believe this Congress would act immediately.

Food stamps, by moving families closer to food security and by allowing them to afford healthful diets on a more consistent basis, can play an important role in preventing childhood obesity. Certainly obesity among low-income people as well as more affluent people in our society is a serious concern. Some have worried that food stamps, by the mere fact of paying for food, contribute to obesity. But all the evidence is to the contrary. It is adequate resources for a healthy diet that reduce obesity, *not* hunger, stress, or recurrent cycles of eating and lack of enough food to eat. Food stamps and other nutrition programs can play a protective role against obesity, although that role may well be diminished by the inadequacy of the benefit amount.

Emerging research is showing that participation in nutrition programs has the potential of protecting children from excess weight gain. An analysis of nationally representative survey data shows that school-age food insecure girls are less likely to be overweight or at risk of overweight if they participate in the School Breakfast Program, School Lunch Program or Food Stamp Program, or any combination of these programs.

Research has shown that obesity can be a potential consequence of food insecurity among women. The reasons may include the ways in which low-income mothers must cope with limited resources for food—sacrificing at times their own nutrition in order to protect their children from hunger and lower nutritional quality. Food insecurity and poverty may also act as physiological stressors leading to hormonal changes that predispose women to obesity. This interaction between food insecurity and obesity does not show up as consistently among children. This may be because families work so hard to protect their children from the consequences of household food insecurity. One of the programs that helps families do this is the Food Stamp Program. An expert panel appointed by the USDA has reviewed the scientific literature and found no evidence of a relationship between food stamp use and obesity. Similarly, an analysis of data from a national representative child development survey showed no evidence that the Food Stamp Program contributed to overweight among poor children. Research and common sense lead to the conclusion that a more adequate Food Stamp Program that supplies vulnerable families with the level of benefits they need to purchase healthful diets on a consistent and reliable basis will help children avoid both food insecurity and obesity.

III. ACTING IN FOOD STAMP REAUTHORIZATION TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND NUTRITION

As important and effective as the Food Stamp Program is, it still needs to be improved in significant ways to further reduce hunger and food insecurity and support nutrition and health.

Recently a team of academic researchers, led by Harry Holzer of Georgetown University, produced an analysis of *The Economic Costs of Poverty in the United States: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor.* They concluded that childhood poverty imposes very large long-term economic costs on American society—by adversely affecting health, education, productivity and other attributes and outcomes,

children's poverty leads to such outcomes as added health costs and lower earnings as adults. The total cost to this country is equal to nearly four percent of GDP, or about $500 billion per year.

One reason these costs are being incurred—why our children are being harmed and our economy is being held back—is the nation's widespread hunger and food insecurity among families with children. As just one example, as Dr. Deborah Frank testified to the House Budget Committee four weeks ago that among children under age 3 (she specializes in the problems of very poor, very young children) those who are food insecure are 90 percent more likely to be in poor health and 30 percent more likely to require hospitalization.

Our nation can improve the nutrition and health of children, as well as seniors, parents and others, and strengthen its schools, health care system and economy by making needed investments in the Food Stamp Program.

Our top priority for the 2007 Farm Bill thus is a strong nutrition title that reflects this strategy by reauthorizing and improving the Food Stamp Program. The 2002 Farm Bill made important progress upon which to build. That bill restored food stamp eligibility for some (but not all) of the many legal immigrants excluded six years earlier; improved access for low-income working families; very modestly increased the standard deduction for some (but a minority of) beneficiaries whose allotment levels had been cut several years earlier by freezing that deduction; reformed how USDA evaluates state administration of the program; and gave states new options to streamline enrollment and reporting, aiding both clients and caseworkers.

But, we have far to go in addressing hunger and food insecurity in this nation. The Food Stamp Program has brought the nation a long way; but it must be strengthened so we can truly move towards eradicating hunger and food insecurity in the midst of our great affluence. To realize the program's potential, Congress must follow three broad strategies: making benefit allotments adequate; opening eligibility to more needy people; and connecting more eligible people with benefits, since only 60 percent of currently eligible people, and barely half of eligible low-income working families, participate in the program. The recommendations below are aimed at achieving these three goals.

These goals are reflected as well in two statements attached by this testimony. The first is a joint position of the Food Research and Action Center, America's Second Harvest—the Nation's Food Bank Network, and the American Public Human Services Association, the association of state food stamp directors and other state and local government human services professionals. The second is a letter to Congress in support of a strong nutrition title signed by more than 1200 national, state and local organizations, with more joining every day.

As a threshold matter, the 2007 Farm Bill must *maintain the entitlement structure* of the Food Stamp Program, which responds to increases in need whether due to local or national economic changes or disasters. One recent example underscores this point: the absolutely essential role that the Food Stamp Program played as an effective "responder" in the wake of the devastating hurricanes of 2005. Several factors contributed to that response: leadership from USDA; key efforts of state governments; the efficiency of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) delivery system; and outreach and advocacy by nonprofit partners. But the foremost factor underpinning the Food Stamp Program's ability to act as an effective post-Katrina "responder" was and is its entitlement structure that lets it respond immediately and flexibly to changes in need.

One essential priority in the Bill must be *making benefit allotments more adequate—increasing the minimum benefit and other allotment levels and reversing the impact of long-term benefit cuts embodied in the 1996 law.* It is the norm rather than the exception for a food stamp recipient household's benefits to run out several days before the end of the month—often in the third week of the month. The average benefit of roughly $1 per person per meal is not enough to purchase an adequate diet. The Thrifty Food Plan, which is the underlying rationale for the benefit amounts, does not represent what a family needs to purchase a minimally adequate diet, particularly for long-term consumption. This shortcoming was bad enough before—it has only been exacerbated by program changes in 1996 that cut benefits across the board and froze the standard deduction from income. By next year these cuts will cost a typical family of a parent and two children $450/year in food stamp benefits—a huge reduction for families struggling with poverty and hunger.

As this testimony has discussed, food stamps fight both obesity *and* hunger, and more adequate allotments would do a better job of both. Food stamp benefits should be based on a food plan that reflects what it actually costs to feed a family a healthy diet, and the impact of the reductions in benefits enacted in 1996 must be addressed.

Moreover, the $10 minimum benefit—unchanged since 1977—is woefully inadequate. It provides barely one-third the purchasing power today that it did when it was set. Most often applicable to seniors and persons with disabilities, the $10 minimum helps too little and discourages very needy people from going through an often complicated application process to obtain such a small amount. A significant increase in the minimum benefit is long overdue.

It is essential, and also long overdue, to *revise resource rules* so that families need not forfeit meager savings in order to participate. Current resource limits are terribly restrictive—$3,000 for households with an elderly or disabled member; $2,000 for other households. The $2,000 limit has not been adjusted for more than two decades—while inflation has nearly doubled. Allowing families that suffer unemployment, involuntary part-time work, illness or other financial emergencies to access food stamp benefits without exhausting their resources will help those families rebound and promote their self-sufficiency long-term, and will further bipartisan goals of fostering savings and asset development. I recently heard Robert Dostis, Director of the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and a Vermont state legislator, tell about a client who was homeless and trying to save two months' rent—one for the security deposit and one for the first month—so she could get herself and her family back into housing. Because this hard and laudable effort on her part pushed her above $2,000 in assets, as it would in most housing markets in this country, she couldn't get food stamps. We have to fix this problem.

We also urge that the 2007 Farm Bill *expand eligibility to more needy people left out of the program now.* These include all otherwise eligible *legal immigrants, able-bodied* adults who now face arbitrary time limits, *ex-drug felons* making new starts in life but disqualified from food stamps for life, and others struggling to make ends meet but facing arbitrary restrictions. We at FRAC are delighted that you will be hearing from Janet Murguia of the National Council of LaRaza this morning about the importance of restoring benefits for legal immigrants. The limitations on these groups' eligibility imposed by the 1996 law, only slightly mitigated since then, has had only one outcome—more hunger and suffering.

The food stamp reauthorization also should allocate funding for food stamp *outreach and education activities.* As I have indicated, the department estimates that just three of six of those eligible under current rules are participating in the program, and even fewer among working families. USDA's "Food Stamps Make America Stronger" media campaign and competitive grants to fund community-based outreach efforts are important initiatives, and a sound start. Considerably more funding for these and other efforts will be important to connect more eligible people with benefits.

Good customer service is undermined by inadequate investments in caseworker staffing and office systems. The problems states have in funding these operations have been exacerbated in the last decade, as the federal government discontinued an enhanced federal match rate for state computer expenses and adopted a cost allocation formula below the traditional 50/50 match rate. As states have been squeezed and have under-invested in staff and systems, that has had negative effects on access to the program. We urge *increased support for state administrative operations.*

The 2007 Farm Bill must *continue to allow recipients choice among food purchases* and *support healthy choices through benefit adequacy, nutrition education, farmers' market access and other strategies.* The current clear distinction between food and non-food items is in keeping with the fundamental purposes of the program and provides consumers and retailers with a simple test for determining an eligible product. Proposals to differentiate among food products, drawing lines among the 300,000 food products on the market, would introduce unnecessary complexity. They also could well drive hungry people out of the program. Much of the stigma that had attached to the Food Stamp Program in the past stemmed from the public nature of redeeming food stamp coupons (the physical scrip that formerly was used) in a supermarket line. The implementation of EBT technology has helped to mainstream and make virtually invisible the food stamp purchase transaction at point of sale. Conversely, treating recipient shoppers differently from other consumers and raising questions at check-out as to what is reimbursable would threaten to increase stigma and run counter to national and state efforts to empower people as they move to self-sufficiency.

Providing people with adequate resources to purchase food is essential, and strengthening the Food Stamp Nutrition Education programs is a second important component in a multi-faceted approach to *ensuring good nutrition outcomes and addressing the nation's obesity problem.* Other components include: supporting strategies that allow food stamps to be used at farmers' markets; ensuring appropriate outlets in communities for obtaining reasonably priced fruits and vegetables; and altering environmental messages that affect individuals' behavior.

Finally, we agree with USDA that the *program should be renamed* to reflect its modernization, reforms and current thrust.

In conclusion, the 2007 Farm Bill should include significant new investments in the Food Stamp Program to renew the nation's effort to eradicate hunger and food insecurity and improve the nutrition, health and learning of all our people, and especially children. The increased investments would pay dividends in good child development, child health, school achievement, a more productive work force, and greater economic security for America's rural, urban and suburban families.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate this opportunity to share our views on the 2007 Farm Bill and look forward to continued work with you and the Committee as the process moves forward.

STATE OF THE UNION

Successes: A Government Reform That Worked

By Jerry Hagstrom, *National Journal*
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Friday, Jan. 19, 2007

In the 1980s, conservatives regaled audiences with tales of welfare mothers in pink Cadillacs who sold their food stamps to unscrupulous retailers for cash that they spent on drugs and liquor. Then-Sen. **Jesse Helms**, R-N.C., called the program a "multibillion-dollar shakedown of the American taxpayers." In 1994, then-House Minority Leader **Newt Gingrich**, R-Ga., proposed in his Contract With America that states take over the food stamp program.

Republicans backed away from Gingrich's plan to end federal food stamps, and so the government was able to act quickly to help the millions of people who were displaced in the worst natural disaster in American history, the hurricanes Katrina, Wilma, and Rita in 2005. In the past 20 years, the program's rates of fraud and abuse have dropped dramatically with the shift from coupons to electronic benefit transfer cards, which are used like debit cards in grocery stores and are difficult to turn into cash.

The food stamp program's basic job is to help the lowest-income people in the country buy food. But the 1988 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act gave the Agriculture Department, which administers the program, authority to provide food stamps to disaster victims even if they are not poor. Before the hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the disaster-response team in USDA's Food and Nutrition Service was watching the weather and sending food to warehouses in Louisiana and Texas. USDA later airlifted infant formula, baby food, and other commodities to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. But as important as these supplies were in the initial days when grocery stores were closed, most hurricane victims got food for the next three months through EBT cards that Agriculture Secretary **Mike Johanns** authorized within days of the tragedy. Because the cards work in any grocery store in the country that cooperates with the food stamp program, hurricane victims could use the cards wherever they ended up. When the benefits ran out, the Agriculture Department could add more money to the cards electronically without having to use the mails.

"In the federal response to this national catastrophe, there is a bright spot," Sen. **Patrick Leahy**, D-Vt., a former Senate Agriculture Committee chairman, said on the Senate floor even as the Federal Emergency Management Agency was coming under fire. "USDA has quietly and efficiently assisted thousands of displaced persons."

Food stamps' strong performance on the Gulf Coast was perhaps the first and most visible step in the rehabilitation of the program's reputation. In

10 Successes, 10 Challenges

Successes
Two-Year Colleges
Cleaner Air
Food Stamps
Assimilation
Entrepreneurs
China, India
Young Soldiers
Charity
AIDS
Foreign Investors

Challenges
Traffic
Consumerism
Drug Abuse
Dead Zones
Income Inequality
Mental Illness
Latin America
Housing
State Pensions

October 2006, the Government Accountability Office said that as the use of electronic cards became universal between 1995 and 2005, the level of trafficking -- the sale of food stamps for cash -- declined from 3.8 cents per dollar in benefits to 1 cent per dollar. At the same time, according to USDA, the state agencies that determine eligibility and distribute the benefits have become so much more efficient in certifying eligibility that the payment error rate has gone down from 10.7 percent in 1998 to 5.48 percent in 2005.

Anti-Americanism

Politics created and saved food stamps. Congress established the permanent food stamp program in 1964 not just to help poor Americans but also to get an increasingly urban- and suburban-dominated Congress to vote for a farm bill. In 1995, then-House Agriculture Committee Chairman (and now Sen.) **Pat Roberts**, R-Kan., saved food stamps by convincing Gingrich and other leaders that urban members wouldn't vote for future farm bills if they didn't reauthorize food stamps. The 1996 welfare reform law eliminated eligibility for almost all legal immigrants and able-bodied, childless adults between the ages of 18 and 50, and participation plummeted from 28 million in 1994 to 17.5 million in 2000. Subsequent bills have restored eligibility for most immigrants who have been in the country for five years.

Jim Weill, executive director of the Food Research Action Center, says that the food stamp program has become more important than ever because the number of Americans with low-paying jobs has grown. He sees the 2007 farm bill as an opportunity to raise the food stamp benefit, which is less than $1 per meal, and to give USDA authority to provide food stamps to disaster victims for up to a year.

Weill will have to contend with budget pressures, but food stamps are much less vulnerable to attack than they were in the past. Agriculture Secretary Johanns, a former Republican governor of Nebraska, sent an e-mail of praise: "The food stamp program effectively provides vital nutrition assistance to over 26 million low-income individuals and families with dignity and respect. I am especially proud of our talented and dedicated USDA Food and Nutrition Service staff who work tirelessly to provide life-sustaining resources to all those impacted by Hurricane Katrina."

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Washington, D.C. – February 26, 2007. America's Second Harvest--The Nation's Food Bank Network, the Food Research and Action Center, the leading national anti-hunger advocacy organization, and the American Public Human Services Association, the nation's principal association of state and local government human services professionals, join together in urging the 110th Congress to make substantial improvements in the Food Stamp Program in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

The changes we recommend would expand program access, simplify program administration, and move benefit levels closer to adequacy for a healthy diet. Our three organizations believe that these changes are necessary to help the program better meet the needs of hungry people in the United States.

The Farm Bill passed by the 107th Congress in 2002 made progress in simplifying the program for both recipients and caseworkers, in granting access and increasing benefits to certain needy households, and in reforming the system of measuring state performance. However, hunger and under nutrition in America remain serious problems, and more steps forward are needed in 2007.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the many people in our communities who are not consistently able to put food on their tables for themselves or their families. Indeed, the recent report "Food Security in the United States, 2005," published in November 2006 by USDA using data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau, documents that more than 35 million people in the United States live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger.

The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of the nation's domestic food assistance programs and the largest non-categorical federal low-income support program. The Food Stamp Program serves an average of more than 26 million needy people in our country a month, yet fails to reach 40 percent of those eligible for the program, and also fails to reach other very needy people who are not even eligible in theory. The nation's first defense against hunger must be strengthened to reach all those who lack the resources to purchase an adequate diet.

The Food Stamp Program's rules can be further simplified and made more understandable for recipients and caseworkers. Such rule changes could foster participation and reduce administrative burdens that impose undue administrative costs and undermine the program's effectiveness. It is also essential that benefits be more adequate for a healthy diet. It is therefore a top priority of our three organizations that the 2007 Farm Bill makes significant progress in improving the program in the following ways:

- Expand Access to the Program. Too many people in our communities are in need of food stamps but cannot get them. The study "Hunger in America 2006," published early last year by America's Second Harvest, found that over 78 percent of people coming to pantries and other emergency food providers have income indicating food stamp eligibility, yet only 35 percent receive those benefits. Moreover, certain groups are excluded despite their need: poor working families with resources slightly in excess of terribly outdated program limits, many legal immigrants, and indigent jobless people seeking employment. Others, particularly the elderly, are discouraged by low benefit levels and resource limits. The elderly and disabled should also be granted nationwide access to "one-stop" programs, now available only in certain states, which automatically attach SSI recipients to food stamp benefits.

- Continue to Simplify and Streamline the Program for Caseworkers and Clients. While food stamp outreach and nutrition education are making important inroads, these efforts need more resources. Too many eligible people – especially working poor, elderly and disabled people – are missing out on benefits. Efforts to increase the proportion of eligible people who actually participate are hampered by shortfalls in federal supports to states for technology and administrative upgrades. The program's rules should facilitate food stamp access to low-income people at nontraditional contact points in their communities, and additional funding should be available for states to develop the necessary technology. The program should provide positive support for state administrative efforts and should not impose new burdens that will make it more difficult for those in need to access benefits they are entitled to receive.

- Improve Adequacy of Benefits. Food stamp benefits are supposed to supplement families' earnings, Social Security and other income so they can have a diet adequate for health and well-being. The government's own studies of the inadequacies of the "Thrifty Food Plan" which is the basis of the food stamp allotment show its inadequacies. But millions of families also can testify personally to the inadequacies on a monthly basis when their resources for food run out. Everyone receiving food stamps must have adequate benefits to allow them to purchase a nutritionally adequate diet. Neither the average benefit level of $1 per person per meal, nor the $10 monthly minimum benefit, is sufficient. This dietary shortfall impairs recipients' nutrition and health, and impedes the ability of children to learn and adults to work.

In addition, the transition from paper coupons to benefit delivery via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards has modernized the Food Stamp Program, eliminated the use of "food stamp" coupons, and provides an important opportunity to rename the program to reflect its modernization.

Our three groups will continue to work closely with each other and with Congress and the Administration as this year's farm bill legislation progresses. We will issue more detailed statements about specific legislative proposals as they are developed.

It is essential that the 2007 Farm Bill address the pressing problem of hunger and the need for an adequate diet in a nation of plenty. It can best do so by ensuring a strong and accessible Food

Stamp Program. Thanks to its basic entitlement structure and non-categorical character, the program has been an extremely important support for tens of millions of Americans over the years and has been quickly responsive to increases in need when natural disasters or national economic trends have left more people in America vulnerable. Congress now has the opportunity to maintain its strength while making improvements that will bring further progress toward elimination of hunger in the United States.

# # #

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Letter to Congress in Support of Strong Nutriti n Title of the 2007 Farm Bill

Signers as of March 9, 2007

As Congress reauthorizes the Farm Bill this year, our top priority is a strong Nutrition title that reauthorizes and improves the Food Stamp Program, the nation's first defense against hunger, and bolsters the efforts of the emergency food assistance system. We strongly urge that the 2007 Farm Bill and the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution reflect those urgent national priorities.

Far too many people in our communities lack resources to put food on their tables consistently for themselves and their families. Indeed, the most recent Census Bureau/U.S. Department of Agriculture survey of food security documents that more than 35 million people in the United States live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger. It is absolutely essential that the 2007 Farm Bill address the pressing problem of hunger amidst plenty by strengthening the nation's food assistance programs.

The Food Stamp Program is a crucial and effective investment in meeting the urgent needs of seniors, people with disabilities, children, and low-income working and unemployed adults. It has nearly eliminated malnutrition from the national landscape and helps prevent the problem of hunger from becoming worse in our communities. Food Stamp Program participation closely tracks economic trends, responding quickly to increases in need, whether due to local or national economic circumstances or to disasters, as seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Food stamps help strengthen families and the American communities where those families reside—rural, urban and suburban. More than 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to families with children, allowing their parents to obtain food at grocery stores for meals at home. Much of the remainder goes to seniors and persons with disabilities. Through the nationwide use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, program utilization has been streamlined for transactions for consumers and store clerks, and EBT has quantifiably reduced the chances of program abuse.

Food Stamps pay dividends for low-income consumers, food producers and manufacturers, grocery retailers and communities. As food stamp purchases flow through grocery checkout lines, farmers' markets and other outlets, those benefits generate almost double their value in economic activity, especially for many hard-pressed rural and urban communities desperately in need of stimulus to business and jobs.

The Food Stamp Program's basic entitlement structure must be maintained while greater resources are provided to the program to more effectively fight hunger in our communities. There are several key areas for program investment:

- Adequacy of Benefits Must Be Improved. The first step to reducing hunger in the U.S. is to ensure that everyone in the Food Stamp Program has the resources to assist them in purchasing and preparing a nutritionally adequate diet. Neither the average food stamp benefit level of $1 per person per meal, nor the $10 per household monthly minimum benefit is sufficient to help families purchase an adequate diet. This dietary shortfall negatively impacts recipients' health and nutrition and impedes the ability of children to learn and adults to work. Another key element to securing an adequate diet will be finding ways to improve access to affordable and healthful foods for food stamp households in low-income neighborhoods.
- Access to the Program Must Be Expanded. Too many people in our communities are in need of food stamps but cannot get them. Only 33 percent of the people in food bank lines are enrolled in food stamps. Those people in need of food but excluded from the Food Stamp Program include working poor families with savings slightly above decades-old and outdated resource limits, many legal immigrants, and numerous indigent jobless people seeking employment.
- Program Simplification and Streamlining for Caseworkers and Clients Must Continue. While food stamp outreach and nutrition education are achieving important advances, these efforts need more resources, and enrollments are hampered by shortfalls in state technology and supports. Too many eligible people—especially working poor and elderly persons—are missing out on benefits.

In addition to the necessary improvements to the Food Stamp Program, the 2007 Farm Bill also provides an opportunity to assist the front-line agencies that deal with the problem of hunger every day. The nation's food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens are stretched to serve more and more people whose food stamps have run out mid-month or whose income and resources put them just above the food stamp eligibility threshold. Currently, more than 25 million people are accessing emergency food annually through food banks. In any given week, some 4.5 million people access food through pantries and soup kitchens throughout the United States. Requests for emergency food assistance are outstripping the resources provided through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). In TEFAP alone, surplus commodity deliveries have declined more than 50 percent in the past year, at the same time that requests for emergency food have increased.

Therefore, we urge the 2007 Farm Bill and FY 2008 Budget to invest significant new resources to make food stamp benefit allotments sufficient to real world needs, to extend eligibility to more vulnerable populations, to connect more eligible people with benefits, and to adequately support emergency feeding programs.

We are fortunate to live in a nation with an abundant and varied food supply. In the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization, we strongly urge Congress and the Administration to help connect more vulnerable people with that food supply and move our communities and the nation as a whole closer to a hunger-free America.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

9to5, National Association of Working Women
AARP
AFL-CIO
AFSCME
Alliance to End Hunger
American Dietetic Association
American Friends Service Committee
American Network of Community Options and Resources
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
America's Second Harvest-The Nation's Food Bank Network
ANSA - Association of Nutrition Services Agencies
Asian American Justice Center
Asian Pacific American Legal Center
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Association of Nutrition Services Agencies
B'nai B'rith International
Bread for the World
CACFP National Professional Association
Center for Economic Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Church Women United
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Food Security Coalition
Congressional Hunger Center
EBT Industry Council of the Electronic Funds Transfer Association
Families USA
Fiscal Policy Institute
Food Research & Action Center
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
Leadership for America's Children & Families
League of Women Voters of the United States
Legal Momentum
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Migrant Legal Action Program
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association Diocesan Ecumenical Officers
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Aging
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Recreation and Park Association
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sodexho Foundation
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
The AIDS Institute
The U.S. Conference of Mayors
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)
United Jewish Communities
United Way of America
USAction
Wider Opportunities of Women
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Committee of 100
World Hunger Year (WHY)
YWCA USA

STATE AND LOCAL GROUPS

Alabama
Association State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors (ASTPHND)
Alabama Coalition Against Hunger
Bay Area Food Bank
Early Childhood - The HIPPY - Mobile Program
Food Bank of North Alabama

Alaska
Alpha Omega Life Care Inc
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
Food Bank of Alaska
Homer Medical Clinic
Kenai Peninsula Food Bank
RESULTS-Anchorage

Arizona
Arizona Advocacy Network
Arizona Community Action Association
Association of Arizona Food Banks
Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona
Community Food Bank, Inc.
Foundation for Senior Living
Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition
South Eastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services
United Food Bank

Arkansas
Arkansas Hunger Coalition
Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance
River Valley Regional Food Bank
St. Augustine Center for Children, Inc.

California
9to5 Bay Area
Alameda County Community Food Bank
Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency
Beyond Shelter

CA Association of Food Banks
Cal/Neva CAP Association
California Association of Nutrition & Activity Programs
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Church IMPACT
California Commission on the Status of Women
California Disability Community Action Network
California Food Policy Advocates
California Head Start Association
California Hunger Action Coalition
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)
California Partnership
California WIC Association
Caminar
Catholic Healthcare West
Central Coast Hunger Coalition
Citrus College Child Development Center
Community Action Partnership Food Bank of San Bernardino Cty.
Community Action Partnership of Kern Food Bank
Contra Costa Child Care Council
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center
Each One - Teach One, Inc.
EarthWorks Enterprises
Encinitas RESULTS Group
Family Action of Sonoma County
Family Service Association
Farm to School Partnership
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County
Food Bank for Monterey County
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food Bank of Nevada County
Food for People
FOOD Share, Inc
Fresno Cty Equal Opportunity Commission Head Start & Preschool
Hardy Child Nutrition
Hartnell College
Health Education Consultant
Healthy Living for You
Hidden Harvest, Inc.
Holy Family Community
HRC Food Bank, Serving Calaveras County
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Imperial Valley Food Bank
InsureVision Technologies
Jewish Federation of Ventura
Joining Hands-India, an Affiliate of the Presbyterian Hunger Program
LABiomedical
League of Women Voters for Riverside
League of Women Voters of California
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
Los Angeles 9to5
Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness
Los Angeles Community Action Network
MarKrist Properties
Montessori for Toddlers
Mount St Joseph-St Elizabeth
National Immigrant Solidarity Network/Action LA Coalition
Older Women's League of California
Parent Voices, El Dorado County
Perpetua & Company
Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California
Piner Elementary School
Redwood Empire Food Bank
RESULTS
River City Community Services
RPM International
San Francisco Food Bank
San Ysidro Health Center
Second Harvest Food Bank
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Senior Gleaners, Inc.
St Jude Medical Center
St. Joseph Health System
St. Joseph Hospital
State Public Affairs, CA, National Council of Jewish Women
The South Group
Urban Harvest
Valley Oak Children's Services
Ventura County Day Care Food Program
www.robynrominger.com
YMCA of the East Valley

Colorado
9to5 Colorado
All Families Deserve a Chance (AFDC) Coalition
Bell Policy Center
Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado
Church & Society, Hope UMC
Colorado Anti-Hunger Network
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute
Colorado Progressive Coalition
Denver Urban Ministries
Growing Home
Longmont Citizens for Justice and Democracy
Metro CareRing
Mile High United Way
Posada
RESULTS Colorado
The Bell Policy Center
Weld Food Bank

Connecticut
3Angels Community Services
ACCESS Community Action Agency
ADRC
AFSCME, Council 4
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Norwich
Center City Churches, Inc.
Charter Oak Health Center
CMH Nutrition, LLC
Collaborative Center for Justice
Community Dining Room
Connecticut Association for Community Action
Connecticut Association for Human Services
Connecticut Dietetic Association
Connecticut Food Bank
Connecticut Food Policy Council
CT Association of Nonprofits
CT Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
CT Citizens Action Group
CT General Assembly
EHFT New Testament Helping Hand
End Hunger Connecticut!
Family & Children's Agency

First Church of the Living God
First Presbyterian Church
Foodshare
Hartford Food System
Hartford WIC Program
HBC Food Pantry
Human Services Council
La Primera Iglesia De Dios
Manchester Area Conference of Churches, Inc.
Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation
Middlesex Coalition for Children
National Council of Jewish Women, CT Public Affairs
New Horizon Food and Clothing Ministry
Norwich Human Services
Parkville Senior Center
People of Faith CT
Plymouth Community Food Pantry
Shiloh Baptist Church
St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center
St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol, Inc
Stafford Family Services
The Collaborative Center for Justice
The Great Commission
The Salvation Army
Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group
Together We Shine
United Way of Greater Waterbury
Warburton Church
Warburton Food Pantry
Wilson Congregational Church
YWCA New Britain
YWCA of the Hartford Region

Delaware
Community Legal Aid Society

District of Columbia
Bread for the City
Capital Area Food Bank
D.C. Hunger Solutions
Fair Budget Coalition
Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care

Florida
America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend
Boca Helping Hands
Center for Independent Living of South Florida
Christian Alliance for Progress
CILSF, Inc
Florida Consumer Action Network
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center
Florida Impact
Florida Legal Services
Health Care Center for the Homeless
Operation Provision, Capital City Christian Church
P.A.N.D.O.R.A., Inc.- Patient Alliance for Neuroendocrineimmune Disorders Organization for Research & Advocacy
Queen of Peace
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish
The Cooperative Feeding Program
YWCA of Palm Beach County

Georgia
Atlanta 9to5
Atlanta Community Food Bank
Citizens Against Violence, Inc.
City of College Park
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Georgia Coalition to End Homelessness
Georgia Rehabilitation Outreach, Inc.
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Northeast Georgia Council on Domestic Violence
Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center
Polk County Women's Shelter
The Links, Brunswick Chapter
YWCA

Hawaii
The Waimaha/Sunflower Residents' Association Inc.

Idaho
Idaho Community Action Network
Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger
The Idaho Foodbank
United Vision for Idaho
Weeks and Vietri Counseling
YWCA of Lewiston ID-Clarkston WA

Illinois
B V
BJBE Sisterhood
Brain Injury Association of America
C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation
Chicago Jobs Council
Child Support in Illinois
Citizen Action Illinois
First Church of the Brethren
Gateway Coalition
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Griffin Center
Habitat for Humanity of Illinois
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Community Action Association
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Lady of Charity
Lake County Center for Independent Living
Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation - Sisters of St. Joseph of La Grange, IL and Wheeling, WV
People's Resource Center
Project IRENE
Saratoga School
Sisterhood Temple Anshe Sholom
Society for Nutrition Education
Women of Reform Judaism
Work Welfare & Families
Young Women's Christian Association
YWCA of Alton

Indiana
Anderson First Friends Food Pantry
Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana, Inc.
Feeding Indiana's Hungry
Holy Cross
Huffer Memorial Children's Center
Indiana Coalition on Housing and Homeless Issues
Lafayette Urban Ministry
Lighthouse Ministries
Open Door/BMH Health Center
Orange County Child Care
Purdue University
REAL Services
Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana

Temple Beth-El Sisterhood
Wabash County Council on Aging
YWCA of Evansville, Indiana
YWCA of Fort Wayne
YWCA of Lafayette

Iowa
Black Hawk County Health Dept.
Catholic Charities
Christian Worship Center
Community Action Agency of Siouxland
Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
Crisis Intervention Services of Mahaska County
Domestic Violence Intervention Program
Food Bank of Iowa
Iowa Citizen Action Network
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Iowa Coalition for Housing & the Homeless
National Association of Social Workers - Iowa Chapter
Noble Photography, INC
Northeast Iowa Food Bank
Phoenix House
Presbytery of Des Moines
Primary Health Care
RESULTS Des Moines
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, IA
Southwest Iowa Latino Resource Center
Vera French Housing Corporation
Waypoint Services
YWCA

Kansas
100 Good Women
Adorers of the Blood of Christ
BBBS of Cowley County
Bonner Springs Elementary School
Breakthrough
Breakthrough Club of Sedgwick County
Carney House Painting
Carol's Day Care
Catholic Social Service
Children, Grandparents &Kinship Care
City of Abilene
Department of Pediatrics
Department of Sociology & Social Work, Fort Hays State University
El Centro, Inc.
Emmaus House, Inc.
Family Service & Guidance Center
First Pres. Church
Futures
Great Plains Earth Institute
Inter-Faith Ministries' Campaign To End Childhood Hunger
Johnson County Housing Services
Johnson County, Human Services & Aging
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Kansas City Kansas Public Schools
Kansas Food Bank
Kansas Food Security Task Force
Kansas Health Consumer Coalition
Kansas National Organization for Women
Kansas Parish Nurse Ministry
KU Children's Center
KU Pediatrics
LINK, Inc.
Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church
Marshall County Health Department
Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Maternal Child Health Coalition of Greater KC
Open Arms Family Child Care
Parents as Teachers
Peace and Social Justice Center of South Central Kansas
Rainbows United, Inc.
Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita
Shawnee County Community Corrections
Sisters of St. Joseph Justice and Peace Center
Sisters of St. Joseph of Wichita
Smart Start of Saline County
Social Justice Office, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Spring Hill Civic Center
St. Paul's United Methodist
Success by 6 Coalition of Douglas County
Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library
True Blue Women
United Methodist Open Door
United Methodist W. KS Mex Am. Ministries
University of Kansas
Western District Conference
Yard of Plastic
YWCA of Topeka
YWCA Wichita

Kentucky
Big Sandy Area Development District
Community Farm Alliance
Dare to Care Food Bank
First Church of God Food Pantry
God's Pantry Food Bank
H.O.P.E., INC
Heaven's Harvest
Kentucky Task Force on Hunger
WestCare Kentucky
Women Infant and Children, KY Dept. of Public Health
YouthBuild Louisville

Louisiana
Archdiocese of New Orleans
Avoyelles Head Start
Bread for the World New Orleans
Catholic Charities (Louisiana Family Recovery Corps.)
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
Crescent House
Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans
Family Service of Greater New Orleans
Food for Families
Harry Tompson Center
HIPPY Program
Jesuit Volunteer Corp: South
Kingsley House
Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)
LUNCH Program

Maine
Aroostook County Action Program
Community Partners in Ending Hunger: Old Town area
GIFT Grace Interfaith Food Table
Healthy Living
Hope Haven Gospel Mission
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

Maine Equal Justice Partners
Maine People's Alliance
Methodist Conference Home, Inc
Neighbor's Cupboard
Owls Head Central School
Partners in Ending Hunger
Portland West, Inc.
Project FEED, Inc.
Sisters of St. Joseph
SP Food Cupboard
The Residential Care Consortium
United for a Fair Economy
Waterville Area Bridges for Peace & Justice

Maryland
GUIDE Youth Services
Manna Food Center
National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter
Pax Christi Montgomery County
Progressive Maryland
Public Justice Center
Stepping Stones Shelter
Through The Kitchen Door International, Inc.
Upper Shore MD WIC

Massachusetts
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.
American Red Cross
Arise for Social Justice
ARTichoke Food Cooperative
Boston Medical Center - Medical-Legal Partnership for Children
Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program
Community Action
Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)
Community Advocates of Cape Cod
Community Connections
Community Partners
Fans With Cans
First Call for Help Hampshire County
HomeStart, Inc
Jewish Federation of Western MA
Kids Project
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
MIRA Coalition
Parent Child Development Center
Project Bread-The Walk for Hunger
Project Hope
Rosie's Place
Somerville Homeless Coalition
South Coastal Counties Legal Services
South Middlesex Legal Services, Inc.
Stavros Center for Independent Living
The Congregational Church of Topsfield, MA
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
The Open Door/Cape Ann Food Pantry
Western Massachusetts Legal Services, Inc.

Michigan
American Red Cross
Ann Arbor RESULTS
Barry-Eaton District Health Department
Bay City Head Start
Center for Civil Justice
Community Action House
Community Housing Alternatives
Covert Public Housing Commission
Do-All, Inc
Economic Justice Commission
Elder Law of Michigan, Inc.
Emmaus House of Saginaw, Inc.
Food Bank Council of Michigan
Gleaners Community Food Bank
Hamilton Community Health Network
Housing Services for Eaton Co
Ionia Housing Commission
Iron Mountain Housing Commission
Katherine's Catering, Inc.
Leadership Team Sisters of Mercy Detroit
Madison Property Company
Michigan Citizen Action
Michigan League for Human Services
Michigan State University Extension
Mid Michigan Community Action Agency
National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Detroit Section
North East Michigan Community Service Agency - Head Start
Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization
RESULTS, Kalamazoo, MI
Sault Ste. Marie Housing Commission
SOS Community Services
The Bottle Crew
The Corner Health Center
The Disability Network
United Way of Midland County

Minnesota
CAER
Community Emergency Service
Dorothy Day Food Pantry
Erickson Rehab Services
Family Pathways
Four Crosses Lutheran Parish
Freeborn Co. Public Health
Grace Lutheran
Hunger Solutions Minnesota
Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Advisory Committee
Long Prairie Emergency Food Pantry
Minnesota Children's Platform Coalition
Minnesota FoodShare
NWCSA-WIC program
Providers Choice
Residents for Affordable Housing
Second Harvest Heartland
Second Harvest North Central Food Bank
Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank
St. Luke's
Tri-Community Food Shelf
YWCA of Minneapolis

Mississippi
MS Human Services Coalition
Public Policy Center of Mississippi

Missouri
CSJ
Daughters of Charity
Daughters of Charity-St. Louis
Daviess County Health Dept
East Missouri Action Agency, Inc.
Gatekeepers of KC

Higbee Senior Citizens Center
Institute for Peace and Justice
Jewish Community Relations Council
Maternal and Child Health Coalition of Greater Kansas City
Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition
Missouri Association for Social Welfare
Missouri Budget Project
Northside Senior Citizen Center
RESULTS St. Louis
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis Province
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
Southside Welfare Rights Organization
Start Talking In Kansas City
The SCORE Foundation
Truman Medical Centers

Montana
Child Care Partnerships
Child Care Resources
Human Resources Council, District XII
McArthur Consulting
Missoula Aging Services
Montana Food Bank Network
Montana People's Action / Indian People's Action
Plentywood, Redstone, and Scobey United Methodist Churches

Nebraska
Action for Healthy Kids
Building Strong Families Fun
Center for People in Need
Columbus Community Hospital
Family Service WIC Program
Good Shepherd Lutheran Community
Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc.
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
Western Community Health Resources
YWCA Grand Island

Nevada
American College of Nurse-Midwives, Dist., Chapter 20
Berkley and Associates
Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Nevada Desert Experience
Nevada Public Health Foundation
People of Faith for Social Justice
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

New Hampshire
American Friends Service Committee - NH
Children's Alliance of New Hampshire
Disabilities Rights Center, Inc.
Immigrants' Rights Task Force
Morning Star Martial Arts
Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter
New Hampshire Citizens Alliance

New Jersey
Association for Children of New Jersey
Center for Food Action in NJ, Inc.
Community FoodBank of NJ
Community Outreach Group
Freehold Area Open Door,, Inc.
Housing Community Development Network of NJ
Mercer Street Friends Food Bank
Mid-Atlantic Regional Anti-Hunger Coalition
Migration and Refugee Services Diocese of Trenton
New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition
New Jersey Citizen Action
Reflection of God Ministry
Reformation Food Pantry
St. Anthony's Social Justice Group
Stelton Baptist Church
Tabatchnick Fine Foods, Inc.
The Crisis Ministry of Princeton and Trenton
The NJ Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers

New Mexico
2nd Harvest Roadrunner Food Bank
Casas de Vida Nueva
Central United Methodist Church
Democracy for New Mexico
Hunger and Poverty Network of Northern New Mexico
Navajo United Methodist Center
New Mexico Association of Food Banks
New Mexico PACE
New Mexico Voices for Children
NM Center on Law and Poverty
NM Task Force to End Hunger
RESULTS-Santa Fe

New York
Albany Damien Center
Alianza Dominicana
Bethel Sunshine Camp
Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church
Blanche Memorial Church
Brooklyn AIDS Task Force
Burke Adult Center
Caring Hands Soup Kitchen @ Clinton Ave United Methodist Church
Cathedral Emergency Services
Cathedral Social Service
Catholic Charities Chemung/Schuyler/Tioga Counties Justice and Peace Ministry
Catholic Charities Diocese of Brooklyn & Queens
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany
Cattaraugus County Women Infant Children's Program
Central Harlem Sobering Up Station
Central New York/Utica Citizens in Action
Chenango County Catholic Charities
Chiz's Heart Street
Christ Church Food Pantry
Church of God Feeding The Hungry
Church of St. Vincent de Paul
Citizen Action of New York
Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church
Clinton County WIC Program
ComLinks, Community Action Partnership
Community Caring Food Pantry
Community Food Pantry
Coney Island Hospital WIC Program
Copes Network Center Inc
Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County
Council of Jewish Orgs of Staten Island
CypressHills Child Care Corp.
Daily Bread Soup Kitchen
Elohim Community Development
Emergency Food & Shelter Program
Empire Justice Center
Family of Woodstock, Inc.
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
Food Bank Association of NYS

Food Bank For New York City
Food Bank of Central New York
Food For All
Food Pantries for the Capital District
FoodChange
Fox House
Friendly Hands Ministry
Full Gospel Tabernacle/Bedstuy Campaign Against Hunger
GardenShare
Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo
Haber House Senior Center
Hamilton County Community Action Agency
Hands Across Long Island
Hands On New York, Inc.
Harlem Tenants Council
Health & Welfare Council of Long Island
Helping Hands Food Pantry
Holy Cross Head Start
Homeless Alliance of Western New York
Hoosick Area Food Closet
Hope Center Development Corporation
Immaculate Heart of Mary Food Pantry
Interfaith Food shelf
Island Harvest
Jewish Family Services of Ulster County
Journey To Life Center
Journey to Life Ministries
Justice & Peace Office-Catholic Charities
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
Linger Tours
Living Resources
Love Reaches Out Food Pantry
Meals on Wheels of Syracuse, New York Inc.
Medical and Health Research Association of New York City, Inc.
Neighbors Together
New Jerusalem Community
New York City Coalition Against Hunger
Nutrition Consortium of NYS
Nutritional Counseling Service
NYC Coalition Against Hunger
NYS Coalition for the Aging, Inc.
Orleans Community Action Committee/Child Care Resource & Ref
Pearl River SDA Church Food Program
Pro Action of Steuben and Yates Inc
Project Hope Food Pantry
Queens North Community Center
Reach Out Food Pantry
Reaching-Out Community Service
Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York
Rescue Ministries Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Secular Franciscan Order
Sisterhood of Temple Beth Am
Society of Jesus, NY Province
Solidarity Committee Capital District
St Augustine Food Pantry
St. Andrews Mission Food Pantry
St. Mary's Episcopal Church Soup Kitchen
St. Paul's Food Pantry
St. Rose Food Pantry
Stapleton U.A.M.E. Church
The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
The Father's Heart Ministries
The HopeLine
The Poughkeepsie Farm Project
The Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York
The Salvation Army
The WIC Association of NYS, Inc.
Tompkins County WIC New York
Town of Colonie Senior Resources
Ulster County Department of Social Services
United Way of New York State
Urban Justice Center
Village Temple Soup Kitchen
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Center
Williams Enterprises
Women of Reform Judaism
Women of Reform Judaism of Temple Beth EL
Young Women's Christian Association of Cortland, NY
YWCA Elmira and the Twin Tiers
YWCA of the Adirondack Foothills
YWCA Syracuse & Onondaga County
YWCA Troy-Cohoes
YWCA-WNY

North Carolina

Angier Food Pantry
Association for Learning Disabled and Handicapped
Brooks Ave. Church of Christ
Building HOPE Ministries
Catholic Parish Outreach Food Pantry
Catholic Parrish Outreach
Chatham County Group Home
Child Evangelism Fellowship
Christian Fellowship Home
Coastal Community Action, Inc.
Deliverance Church Food Pantry
Emmanuel Temple
Faith Hope Deliverance Christian Center
Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina
Fuquay Varina Emergency Food Pantry
God's Vision Ministries, Inc.
Halifax-Warren Smart Start
Leak Street Cultural Center
Legal Services of Southern Piedmont
Merry Grove Baptist Church
Ministries of the Bread of Life
Mission Raleigh
Mother Hubbard's Cupboard
NC Justice Center
New Hanover County Health Dept
New Trinity Baptist Church
New Vision Christian Church
North Carolina Association of Local Nutrition Directors
North Carolina Fair Share
Onslow Community Ministries Soup Kitchen
Passage Home, Inc.
Potter Wheel
Power of Praise Tabernacle of Deliverance
Precious Blessings Outreach Ministries
Salvation Army
Sandhills/Moore Coalition for Human Care
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC
Shiloh Child Care & Soup Kitchen
Sisters of Mercy
St. Brendan the Navigator Loaves and Fishes Pantry
St. Brendan the Navigator Social Concerns Committee
St. David's Episcopal Church

St. Joseph Catholic Church Outreach Ministries
St. Mary Social Ministry Outreach
The Advocacy for the Poor
The Servant Center, Inc.
Tri County Community Health Center WIC Program
Urban Ministries of Wake County
Volunteers of America - Willow Pond
Wendell United Methodist Church
Word of God Fellowship
Works for Christ Christian Center
YWCA of the Greater Triangle

North Dakota
1st Presbyterian Church
ABLE
Carrington's Daily Bread
Central Dakota Ministerial Food Pantry
Community Action Program Region VII, Inc.
Community Action Region VI
Community Emergency Food Pantry
Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency
Family Recovery Home
Great Plains Food Bank
Hazen Food Pantry
Hillsboro Food Pantry
HIT, Inc.
Lansford Food Pantry
Living Waters Family Worship Center
Lutheran Disaster Response/Lutheran Social Services ND
McLean Family Resource Center
MHA/Fargo Social Club
Minot Community Supper
Minot Housing Authority
Nokomis Child Care Centers I & II
North Dakota People.Org
Our Lady of Grace Food Pantry
Parshall Resource Center
Red River Valley Community Action
Richland Wilkin Emergency Food Pantry
SENDCAA
SMP Health System
The Episcopal Church
The Lord's Cupboard Food Pantry & Taste of Heaven Soup Kitchen
The Salvation Army
Women's Action and Resource Center
YWCA Cass Clay
Zion Lutheran Church

Ohio
American Association of Service Coordinators
Call to Renewal of Summit County
Catholic Charities
Cleveland Foodbank, Inc.
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
Council on Older Persons
Cuyahoga County WIC Program
Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs
Faith Ministries Food Pantry
First Congregational UCC
Goodwill Industries of Lorain County
Hamilton Living Water Ministry, Inc.
Hitchcock Center for Women, Inc.
LaGrange Lions Community Foundation
Lutheran Social Services
Management Assistance for Nonprofit Agencies
Mid-Ohio Food Bank
Miller Avenue United Church of Christ
Neighborhood Housing Association
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks
Ohio Empowerment Coalition
Ohio Jewish Communities
Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy
Padua Center
Plymouth-Shiloh Food Pantry
Primed Physicians
Project Hope
Results-Columbus
Sanctuary Community Action
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Ohio
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio
Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley
Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, Ohio
Southview Baptist Church Food Pantry
St. Rita Hunger Program
St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry
The Center for Community Solutions
The Foodbank, Inc.
The Love Center Food Cupboard
Toledo Area Ministries
Toledo NW Ohio Food Bank
Young Women's Christian Association of Hamilton
YWCA Eastern Area
YWCA Great Lakes Alliance
YWCA of Alliance
YWCA of Greater Cincinnati
YWCA of Hamilton
YWCA of Salem

Oklahoma
Osage Monastery
Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

Oregon
American Association of University Women of Oregon
Children First for Oregon
Community Action Directors of Oregon
Community Information Center, Inc
Congregation Beth Israel Sisterhood
Marion Polk Food Share
Non Profit Funding Solutions
Oregon Action
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force
ROSE Community Development
Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality
Women's Rights Coalition

Pennsylvania
Bernardine Center
Borough of Leetsdale Fire Department
Brethren Housing
Carbon County, PA
Catholic Charities
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg PA
Catholic Social Services
Central PA Food Bank
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
Centre County Food Bank Network
Chester County Cares
Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley

Corner Cupboard Food Bank
Ebenezer Church
ECCM
Enhanced Care Coordination Management
Erie Tenant Council
Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania
Family Planning Council, Philadelphia
Family Services of NW PA
First Presbyterian Church of Towanda, Pa
Five Barley Loaves Food Bank
Friends Neighborhood Guild
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
GreyNuns of the Sacred Heart
Hanover Hospital
Health Promotion Council
Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County PA
Information & Referral of South Central Counties, Inc.
JCCs Klein Branch
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
JSPAN, Jewish Social Policy Action Network
Just Harvest
Lebanon County Christian Ministries
Maternity Care Coalition
Mision Santa Maria, Madre de Dios
Montco Community Action Development Commission
Montgomery Cty Community Action Development Commission
Montour County Human Services
Most Holy Trinity Church
Nutrition Action Group, Huntingdon PA.
PathWaysPA
Pennsylvania Assn. of County Human Services Administrators
Pennsylvania Association of Regional Food Banks
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Philadelphia Health Management Corporation
Pleasant Valley Ecumenical Network
Pocono Healthy Communities Alliance
PrimeTime Health
Rainbow Kitchen Community Services
Rankin Christian Center
Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast PA
SHARE Food Program, Inc.
Sisters of Mercy
Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
Social Justice Committee, Wayne Presbyterian Church
Trinity Soup Kitchen
UBCA Community Trust for Family Life Improvement, Inc.
United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania
Urban Nutrition Initiative
Wayne County Food Pantry
Westmoreland County Food Bank
YMCA/YWCA of Hazleton
YWCA of Hanover
YWCA of Lancaster
YWCA of Pottsville
YWCA Philadelphia

Rhode Island
CHA
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
George Wiley Center
RI Ocean State Action
University of Rhode Island

South Carolina
AHEPA 284 II
Calabash Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
Chapin We Care Center
Christian Ministry Center
Clarendon County Disabilities & Special Needs Board
Columbia Community Outreach
Columbia Hope In Christ
Friends United, inc.
Grace Christian Ministries
Greenville Quaker Meeting
Harvest Hope Food Bank
HOPE Worldwide, South Carolina
International Praise COG
Jehovah Jireh Outreach
Kids Cafe WPC
Loaves & Fishes
Mt Pleasant Swansea Outreach
Noisette Foundation
Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services of South Carolina, Inc
Richland Community Health Care Association, Inc.
Saint John Baptist Church Food Pantry
Samaritan House
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center
SHARE Community Action Partnership
Sistercare Lexington Shelter I
Sistercare Richland Shelter
South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS (SC-C2EA)
South Carolina Fair Share
St. Ann Catholic Church
YWCA of Greater Charleston

South Dakota
South Dakota School-Age Care Alliance
YWCA Sioux Falls

Tennessee
MANNA
Memphis Food Bank
Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association
Tennessee Citizen Action
Tennessee Justice Center
The Black Children's Institute of TN
West Tennessee Legal Services

Texas
Capital Area Food Bank of Texas
Center on Public Policy Priorities
Children at Risk
Cooper Securities
Covenant Health System
Daughters of Charity
DixieLand Advice and More
East Texas Food Bank
Food Bank of West Central Texas
God's Army/Praying Women in Action
La Fe Policy and Advocacy Center
LifeOptions North Texas Food Bank
RESULTS-Austin
San Antonio Food Bank
South Plains Food Bank
Texas Food Bank Network
United Way of San Antonio
United Ways of Texas
West Texas Food Bank

Williams-Russell & Johnson, Inc.
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Woodland City Alliance of Tenants

Utah
Coalition of Religious Communities
Crossroads Urban Center
Disabled Rights Action Committee
Peace & Justice Commission
Primary Children's Medical Center
Salt Lake Community Action Program
Slow Food Utah
The Anti-Hunger Action Committee
The Golden Rule Mission
Utah Community Action Partnership Association
Utahns Against Hunger

Vermont
132 main productions
A Sense of Wonder Childcare
Addison Central Supervisory Union
Addison County Community Action Group
Addison County Parent/Child Center
AmeriCorps* VISTA
Another Way
Applegate Housing Inc.
ARC-Rutland Area
Barton Senior Center
Bellows Falls Community Garden
Bennington Housing Authority
Bike Recycle Vermont
Burlington Currency Project
Cafe Services
Cathedral Church of St. Paul
Central Vermont Community Action Council
Central Vermont Council on Aging
Champlain Valley Agency on Aging
Champlain Valley OEO
Child Care Resource
Chittenden Community Action
Community & Economic Development Office
Community Health Center of Burlington
Coordinate Statewide Housing Services of Champlain Valley
Office of Economic Opportunity
Darling Inn Senior Meal Site
Deerfield Valley Food Pantry
Early Childhood Council of Windham County
Economic Services, Agency of Human Services, VT
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont
First Congregational Church of Christ
Food Works
Franklin County Senior Center
Friends of Burlington Gardens
Global Community Initiatives
Grace's Kitchen
Hand In Hand
Hartford Housing Authority
Healthy City Youth Farm
Heineberg Senior and Community Center
Highgate Non-Profit
Hinesburg Community Resource Center-Foodshelf
Housing Vermont
Infant Child Guidance Program
Interfaith Summer Lunch and Recreation, Middlebury
Johnson Food Shelf
King Street Youth Center
Lamoille Community Food Share
Lamoille Valley Peer Navigator
Laraway Youth & Family Services
Learning Works
Lunenburg / Gilman / Concord Senior Citizens Inc
MacWorks
Malletts Bay Congregational Church
Marlboro School
Meals on Wheels of Lamoille County
Milton Family Community Center
Montpelier Food Pantry
Montpelier Housing Authority
Montpelier Sr. Meals Program
Morningside Shelter
Mulberry Bush Early Learning Center
Nativity/St.Louis Foodshelf
North Country Coalition for Justice & Peace
North East Kingdom Community Action
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)
Northern Tier Center For Health
Northgate Housing, Inc.
Northgate Residents' Ownership Corp.
Opportunities Credit Union
Orange County Parent Child Center
Our Place Drop-In Center
Oxbow Senior Independence Program
Parent/Child Center Network
Parks and Recreation
Peace & Justice Center, Vermont Livable Wage Campaign
PeaceVermont
People of Addison County Together
Pittsford Foodshelf
Project Against Violent Encounters
Project Haiti VT
Randolph Area Community Development Corporation
Richford Health Center
River Arts of Morrisville, INC
Rock Point School
Rockingham Area Community Land Trust
Rutland County Women's Network & Shelter
S. Burlington High School
Salvation Farms
Samaritan House, Inc.
South Burlington High School
South Burlington School District
Spectrum Youth and Family Services
Springfield Family Center
Springfield Housing Authority
Springfield School District
St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
St. Francis of Assisi Church
The DREAM Program, Inc.
The Lamoille Family Center
Umbrella
United Church of Christ
United Way of Bennington County
United Way of Chittenden County
United Way of Lamoille County
United Way of Southern Windsor County
University of Vermont Extension
Vermont Achievement Center
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger

Vermont Center for Independent Living
Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights
Vermont Community Loan Fund
Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
Vermont Department of Health
Vermont Dietetic Association
Vermont FEED
Vermont Foodbank
Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.
Vermont Parent Information Center
Vermont Protection & Advocacy, Inc.
V-Line Transportation, LLC
Voices for Vermont's Children
VT Conference of the United Church of Christ
Warren United Church
Washington County Youth Service Bureau, Boys & Girls Clubs
Westgate Housing Inc.
Windham Child Care Association
Winooski Police Department
Winooski Recreation Dept.
Women Helping Battered Women, Inc.
WomenSafe
Woodbury Calais Food Shelf

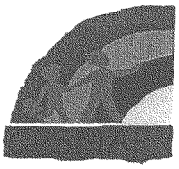
Virginia
Arlington Steering Committee for Services to Older Persons
Blue Ridge Independent Living Center
Bon Secours Health Systems
Federation of Virginia Food Banks
Foodbank of Southeastern VA
Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization
Virginia Community Action Partnership
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Voices for Virginia's Children

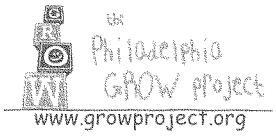
Washington
AIDS Housing of Washington
Americorps
AskComplianceWiz
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Blue Mountain Action Council
Bonney Lake Food Bank
Carolyn Downs Family Medical Center
Catholic Community Services
Child and Family Advocate
Children's Alliance
Connect Nutrition
Copalis Food Bank
Council on Aging & Human Services
Creative Solutions
Emergency Food Network
Families Unlimited Network
Food Lifeline
GH/PAC Dist. Center
Greater Seattle Dietetic Association
Harborview Medical Center
Hood Canal Food Bank
HopeSource
Kids Northwest
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
Loon Lake Food Pantry
Maple Valley Food Bank
Meals Partnership Coalition
MultiCare Health System
Multi-Service Center
North Kitsap Fishline
North Whidbey Help House
Northwest Harvest
Northwest Regional Council
OlyCAP
Olympic Community Action Programs
OPERATION: Sack Lunch
ReachOut Food Bank
Rotary First Harvest
Sea Mar Community Health Center
Seattle Food Committee
Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County
Small Potatoes Gleaning Project
Solid Ground
South Sound Outreach Services
St. James Family Center
St. Vincent Center
Statewide Poverty Action Network
The Food Connection
The Gleaners Coalition
Thurston County Food Bank
Toppenish Community Chest Food Bank
University District Food Bank
Volunteers of America Western Washington
WA State Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition
WA State Food and Nutrition Council
Washington Association of Local WIC Agencies
Washington Community Action Network
Washington State Coalition for the Homeless
Washington State Dietetic Association
Washington State Farmers Market Association
Western Region Anti-Hunger Consortium
YWCA Wenatchee Valley

West Virginia
Direct Action Welfare Group
Harrison County Democracy for America
Rosey Futures Social Work Services, Inc
Statewide Independent Lining Council
Ursuline Sisters
Verizon Engineering
West Virginia Citizen Action Group

Wisconsin
16th St. Community Health Center WIC
9to5 Poverty Network Initiative
Caritas
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Clark County DSS
ECHO, Inc.
EINPC
ESA
Hunger Prevention Council of Dane County Wisconsin
Hunger Task Force
Racine Dominicans
St. Bede Monastery
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Wyoming
KT Consulting
Wyoming Health Initiative
St Thomas Episcopal Church





Testimony
Before the Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives

Tuesday, March 13, 2007

Statement of Dr. Mariana Chilton, Principal Investigator, The Philadelphia GROW Project and Co-Principal Investigator of the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP) at Drexel University School of Public Health and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

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Drexel University School of Public Health
1505 Race St. Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tel. 215-762-6512 Fax 215-762-4088
Mariana.Chilton@drexel.edu
www.growproject.org

Testimony of Dr. Mariana Chilton
US House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
March 13, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Committee Members:

It is an honor to be invited to speak to you today about the importance of child nutrition and child health as you begin your hard work of reviewing the Food Stamp Program. I am a public health researcher from Pennsylvania, where agriculture is the number one industry. I am here today to speak on behalf of the more than 23,000 infants and toddlers and their families across the United States who show up to emergency rooms and ambulatory care clinics with health crises whose roots are far beyond the clinic walls. I am also one of several pediatric and public health researchers from the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP). My colleague; Dr. Diana Cutts, from Minneapolis, had hoped to be here today but was too ill to travel. So today I represent C-SNAP in Minnesota and Pennsylvania. C-SNAP is a multi-site research study that provides the most current and largest dataset in the nation about the food security, health, and development of very young, low-income children. We have held in our hands each one of these 23,000 children in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Arkansas, and Massachusetts, California and Washington, DC. We have measured their height, taken their weight, and interviewed their parents and grandmothers about their participation in Food Stamps, WIC, housing and child care programs. We ask about all of the policies that begin right here on The Hill.

I want to tell you Alexander's story. He's a six-month-old baby, who came in with pneumonia. His mother brought him to the emergency room at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia last week. When we interviewed his mother, Marilynn, she told us that they did not have enough money to buy food. She said they told her that her husband makes "too much money." He makes $14 an hour, which puts them just over the limit for their household size. She explained she skipped paying her credit card bills in order to pay for food. She also described how she could not pay her heating bill, so her house was cold. In the meantime, she says due to his pneumonia, baby Alexander lost weight, and they do not have enough money for food to make it to the end of March. My physician colleagues would not be surprised that a hungry baby would catch pneumonia. They repeatedly explain that good immune function depends on good nutrition. Furthermore, good nutrition is the brain's building blocks. Alexander's food insecurity, weight loss and illness place him at risk for long-term developmental problems.

Food insecurity and poor child health

Almost every day of the week, our researchers use the 18-point scale developed and utilized by the United States Department of Agriculture to document *food insecurity*. The disparities in food insecurity are astounding. Food insecurity rates for African Americans and Latinos are more than two times higher than they are for whites (1). One might wonder if the health disparities we see in these populations may have a basis in poor nutrition. Moreover, if we look at the USDA Food Security report that is released every year, it has been consistently reported since 1999 that

the surest way for a family to be at risk for food insecurity is to have a very young child under the age of six. (See Chart 1.)

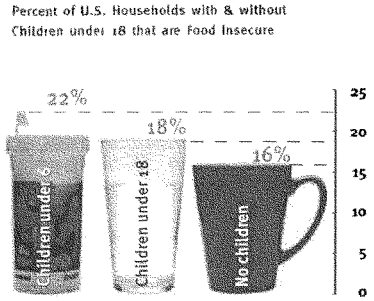

CHART 1. Source: "Nourishing Development: A Report on Food Insecurity and the Precursors to School Readiness in Very Young Children," C-SNAP, 2006 Data from Nord, Andrews and Carlson, 2006

For your interest, we have appended a chart for the members of the Committee showing the most recent rates of food insecurity in your states, with specific data about the youngest children in the states where we are conducting C-SNAP. We welcome visits from the members of the Committee to C-SNAP sites and Grow Clinics in your states, so that you can see the problem firsthand. In addition to C-SNAP sites, there are Grow Clinics in Los Angeles, Houston, New York, and Florida to which we could readily refer you.

C-SNAP helps us all to understand how policies are written on the bodies of little children. We monitor the most vulnerable group of children, those in the rapid growth phase from birth to 3 years old. Our research with thousands of children across the country demonstrates that food insecurity is bad for child health, with potential lifetime consequences. At the back of this testimony, we include a list of our C-SNAP research publications, on which this testimony is grounded.

For example, C-SNAP has found that children in food insecure households are 90% more likely to be in poor health and are 30% more likely to have a history of being hospitalized.

Food Insecurity and Childhood Development

Food insecurity is also related to a higher rate of developmental risk (see Chart 2). Nutrition provides the building blocks to build new brain, and the raw materials for brain neurotransmitters, which are the chemical signals between nerves. Everything from cognitive development, fine and gross motor skill development, to educational attainment, and psychosocial disorders are linked to a child's nutritional status. The brain building blocks for all of these skills are laid down in the first three years of life. If a child does not have proper nutrition in this critical period, long before they cross the threshold of a school, their ability to pay attention and learn may be permanently altered, starting the child on a downward spiral for life. Problems with development linked to food insecurity impair a child's school readiness and school achievement (2). Preschool children who are food insecure are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems (3,4).

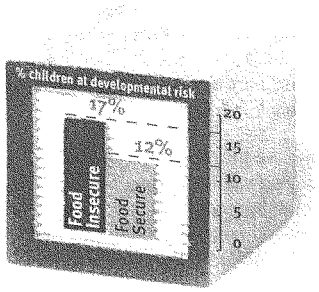

Chart 2 Source: "Nourishing Development: A Report on Food Insecurity and the Precursors to School Readiness in Very Young Children," C-SNAP, 2006.

In short, pediatricians, nurses, nutritionists and teachers struggle with the tragic consequences when a child does not get good nutrition in those first three years.

All of these negative impacts on a child's development translate into dollars subsequently spent by the public sector and by families to address issues that could have been prevented—expenditures that could have been avoided if we practiced the prevention that we know works by assuring adequate food and nutrition to these young children.

Food Stamps is a Medicine that Works
There is some good, powerful medicine for this problem. Doctors, pediatricians, teachers and nutritionists cannot prescribe this medicine. However, you can. You can prescribe this good medicine through your hard work of protecting and enhancing the Food Stamp Program.

- Our research shows that children whose family received food stamps were 26% *less* likely to be food insecure.

- Our research has also shown that food stamps buffer young children from health problems in food insecure households.

Other researchers have found that if a child, starting at birth, is enrolled in the Food Stamp Program then the Medicaid payments for young children's anemia and malnutrition (termed "Failure to Thrive" in medical settings) are likely to decrease as compared to children who did not receive food stamps from birth (5). In older children, particularly girls, food stamps have also been shown to decrease the risk of obesity (6). And another recent study demonstrated that among 8000 children followed from kindergarten to third grade, those whose families *began* to receive food stamps achieved significantly greater improvement in reading and math scores than those whose families *stopped* receiving food stamps (7). Although brain size and structure can be most affected by malnutrition in early life, brain function can be seriously affected at any age.

Food Stamps are an effective medicine. But most of the time, our research shows that the dose of medicine is too low.

Employment and Food Stamps
The moms of these children in our C-SNAP sample are hard working. Over one half of the C-SNAP sample is employed. Yet, what our data clearly show is that even those who are employed and receiving food stamps cannot make enough money to stave off food insecurity, nor are they buffered from the effects of benefit levels that are too low.

When America's families get food stamps, the dose is often what my pediatrician colleagues would call "sub-therapeutic." This is like when a doctor does not give enough penicillin for a child's strep throat, and the infection lingers, or comes back again with a vengeance. You might remember that the Thrifty Food Plan is the USDA's theoretical estimate of what it would cost to purchase a grocery basket that provides a minimally adequate diet. This serves as the basis on which food stamp allotments are calculated. The average food stamp benefit is just one dollar per meal per person per day. We show in the report entitled, *The Real Cost of the Healthy Diet*,

that even assuming a family of two adults and two children receive the maximum possible food stamp benefit ($1.40 per meal per person per day), which few real life families actually do, they would come up short about $800 a year if they tried to purchase the government recommended Thrifty Food Plan market basket shopping in Boston.

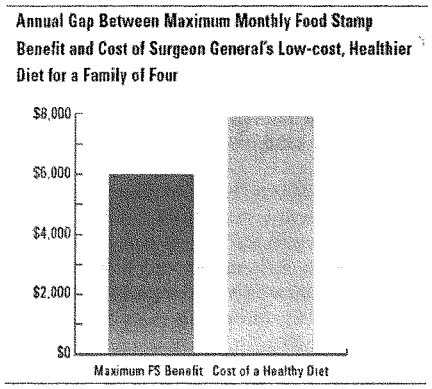

Chart 3 Source: "The Real Cost of a Healthy Diet" C-SNAP/Boston Medical Center, 2005

As the government's lowest cost meal plan, the Thrifty Food Plan does not reflect current scientific thinking about nutrition and health. If a family of four like Marilynn's, tried to purchase the most economically reasonable version of the Surgeon General's most recent dietary recommendations, their costs would exceed the maximum possible food stamp allotment by nearly $2,000 a year. (See Chart 3) This is an impossible expense for families who are constantly trading off how to have money to get to work, pay for child care, keep a roof over their heads, or keep the house warm while trying to provide healthy meals.

Even the USDA's most recent report on food insecurity in the United States shows that the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan is about the same amount as what food insecure families pay for food. Food secure, and thus healthier families, spend 33 percent more than the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (1). In other words, the current Thrifty Food Plan, on which Food Stamps are based, is a recipe for keeping families food insecure.

On the basis of our medical research and that of others, my colleagues and I make the following recommendations:

1. **Food stamp benefits should be based on a food plan that reflects what it actually costs to buy a healthy diet for all members of the family. Currently, the "dosage" is not enough.**

2. **Increase the minimum benefit from $10 to at least $25.**

3. **Do not eliminate categorical eligibility. If a family is low-income and struggling enough to receive some TANF benefits, then their eligibility for food stamps should remain automatic. No single program can protect the health of children in low-income families, but multiple programs that cover the multiple costs of raising a family.**

4. **Raising the asset cap above the current level ($2,000 in most cases) will allow poor families to save modest amounts of money and begin to accumulate the assets needed to raise themselves out of poverty and off of food stamps.**

5. **Do not cut the commodity food program for eligible children or elders. Children and the elderly are at similar risk for poor health and poor cognitive functioning if they are food insecure.**

Back to our C-SNAP families. There are families like that of Juan Luis, who was trying to make ends meet and lost his family food stamp benefits because he found another job that tipped his salary over the threshold for receiving food stamp. But C-SNAP finds taking away such good medicine for babies is dangerous. Babies and toddlers whose family food stamp benefit was terminated or reduced were twice as likely to demonstrate the most severe form of food insecurity (child food insecurity) when compared to those who had had no change in their family food stamp benefits.

Not only are kids whose family loses food stamps more likely to be food insecure, but also their health is put into jeopardy. Children from families who lose food stamps are much more likely to be in poor health.

Our C-SNAP sites in Los Angeles, California and in Minnesota, Montana pick up many immigrants, including many young Latino children. Latino children who are in food insecure homes are two times more likely to be at developmental risk than Latino children in food secure households. Our data show that Latinos have very high rates of food insecurity, especially our newest American citizens born to immigrant parents. But food stamps protect these children; citizen children of immigrant parents are 32% less likely to be in poor health if their parents receive food stamps. Food stamps can make a profound difference, but too many new Americans are not getting the nutrition assistance they need.

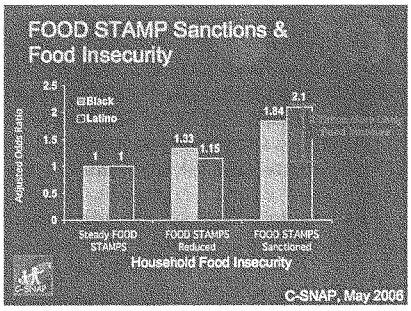

Chart 4. Source: The Impact of Food Insecurity on the Development of Young Low-Income Black and Latino Children. C-SNAP for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2006

Being a mother of three young children myself, when I think of these children, I cannot help but think of the children's educational cartoon, *Dora The Explorer*, and her magical backpack. I wonder what people would think if the cartoon showed that when a child like Dora from a Latino family was cut off of food stamps, their odds of food insecurity would double? (See Chart 4) What would happen if the American people knew that even a reduction in food stamps over the

course of one year for a low-income African American toddler increases the odds that that child would be in fair or poor health?

In real life the backpacks of too many children like Dora are not magical (filled with whatever they need as they make their way to school). Rather, many such backpacks are empty or being emptied, sinking their chances of succeeding in school. If her family were food insecure, Dora herself would be a very lethargic or irritable child, instead of the bubbly problem-solver that she is.

Which brings us to our final recommendations:

6. **Restore food stamp eligibility to all income-eligible legal immigrants.**

7. **Increase outreach to families regardless of the parents' immigration status in order to reach their eligible young children. Many eligible children are missing out on benefits because their parents do not qualify and do not know or are afraid to apply on their behalf.**

8. **Protect the nutrition education component to the Food Stamp Program**

9. **Invest in infrastructure to help states run the program more smoothly and serve more people more efficiently.**

To give the Farm Bill a **strong nutrition title** would promote good public health. The premier governmental public health charge of the 21st Century is the document **Healthy People 2010**. Healthy People 2010 sets goals in all major areas of public health--food security is one of them. In the year 2000, the food insecurity rate was 10.9 percent. Healthy people 2010 set a goal for food insecurity to be reduced to 6 percent. In the year 2005, the food insecurity rate was 11 percent (roughly 35 million Americans). That means that, according to our government's goals, this rate should be cut in half within the next 5 years. The Farm Bill is your prescription for following through on these commitments.

When you consider the proposed cuts to the Farm Bill, this is your opportunity to make history by ensuring a **strong nutrition title** that will make children's bodies strong, their health excellent, and their minds ready to learn. Think of any cut as a reduction that will have a direct impact on the families I told you about. Each cut comes with a face, a name, and, in some cases, a doctor's bill. Think of all food stamp recipients as one American family you are providing food stamps for. Think that any reduction in food stamps will make our young children more food insecure, more likely to be hospitalized, more likely to be sick, less able to think, less able to grow well to achieve in school, less able to relate to her peers, and will lessen their chances for success as part of the future workforce. Food Stamp Program expansions will protect children from these insidious side effects of hunger and food insecurity.

I began this testimony by telling you how we, as researchers know how food stamps affects health and wellbeing. That we have put down our clipboards, and have held each one of these 23,000 children as we measure and weigh them. As a scientist I am confident that you

understand that your vote on each aspect of the Farm Bill will affect the bodies and brains of our babies and toddlers. Imagine the budding brain of Alexander, the 6-month-old baby boy with pneumonia whose mother we interviewed last week. I am confident that you will find the way to expand the Food Stamp Program in the Farm Bill, and that you will therefore expand Alexander's chances and the chances of all children of becoming Americans who have reached their full potential.

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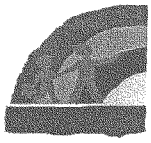
Testimony of Dr. Mariana Chilton
US House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
March 13, 2007



Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program
Research Publications

2002

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Subsidized Housing and Child Nutritional Status: Data from a Multisite Surveillance Study. Meyers, Alan, Cutts, Diana, Frank, Deborah A., Levenson, Suzette, Skalicky, Anne, Cook, John Berkowitz, Carol, Black, Maureen, Casey Patrick and Zaldivar. Nieves *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.* 2005; 159:551-556. *http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/159/6/551?ct*

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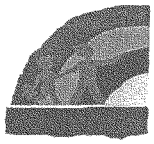
Child Food Insecurity and Iron Deficiency Anemia in Low-Income Infants and Toddlers in the United States. Skalicky, Anne, Meyers, Alan, Adams, William, Yang, Zhaoyan, Cook, John, Frank, Deborah A. *Maternal and Child Health Journal,* 2006 March; 10(2): 177-184 *http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/publications-abstracts.htm*



Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program Reports

Food Stamps As Medicine: A New Perspective on Children's Health, *February 2007.*
The Food Stamp Program is America's first line of defense against hunger and the foundation of our national nutrition safety network. Physicians and medical researchers also think it is one of America's best medicines to prevent and treat childhood food security. The report demonstrates the important protective effect of food stamps on child food insecurity and for citizen children of immigrants.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/Food%20Stamps-Medicine%202-12-07.pdf

Safeguarding the Health, Nutrition, and Development of Young Children of Color, *September/October 2006.*
An article summarizing C-SNAP's two reports on children of color and the buffering impact of nutrition assistance on their health and well-being as well as the way in which food insecurity puts young children of color at increased developmental risk. Published in Focus Magazine, a bi-monthly magazine of the Joint Center For Political and Economic Studies.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/SeptOct2006-Children%20of%20Color.pdf

Nourishing Development: A Report on Food Insecurity & the Precursors to School Readiness among Very Young Children, *July 2006.*
A report of original C-SNAP findings demonstrating that the foundations of school readiness are laid long before the start of formal education begins.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/Nourishing%20Development%20Report%207-06.pdf

The Impact of Food Insecurity on the Development of Young Low-Income Black and Latino Children;' & 'Protecting the Health and Nutrition of Young Children of Color: The Impact of Nutrition Assistance and Income Support Programs' *- Research Findings from the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP),* (Prepared for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute), *May 2006.*
A pair of reports demonstrating the increased vulnerability of young black and Latino children from low-income households to developmental risk linked to food insecurity and the buffering effect that family support programs can have on young black and Latino children's health and growth.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/Children%20of%20Color%20Reports%20May%202006.pdf

The Real Co$t of a Healthy Diet: Healthful Foods are Out of Reach for Low-Income Families in Boston, Massachusetts, *August 2005*
A report from a research team from the Boston Medical Center Department of Pediatrics revealing that, on average, the monthly cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (upon which Food Stamp Program benefits are based) is $27 more than the maximum monthly food stamp benefit allowance. A low-cost healthier diet based on the most recent nutrition guidelines exceeded the maximum monthly food stamp benefit by $148 -- an annual differential of $1776. This is an unrealistic budgetary stretch for most families who qualify for nutrition assistance.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/HealthyDiet_Aug2005.pdf

The Safety Net in Action: Protecting the Health and Nutrition of Young American Children, *July 2004*
A comprehensive summary of C-SNAP findings showing the positive impact of five public assistance programs on young children's food security, growth, and health.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/CSNAP2004.pdf

The Impact of Welfare Sanctions on the Health of Infants and Toddlers: A Report from the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, *July 2002.*
A report based on C-SNAP findings published in the July 2002 Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. Welfare sanctions and benefit decreases have serious negative implications for infants and toddlers' health and food security.
http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/csnappublic/C-SNAP%20Report.pdf

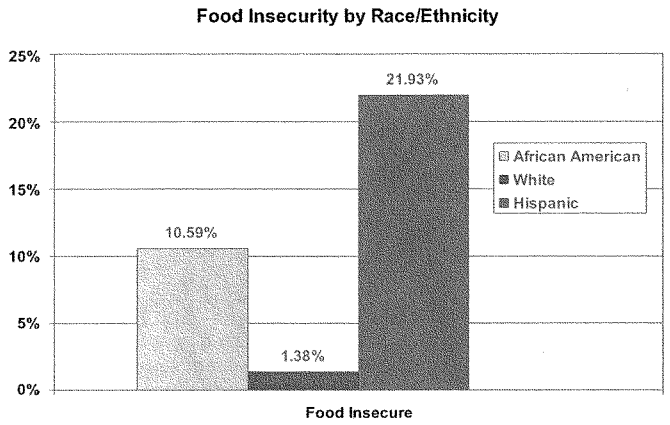
Testimony of Dr. Mariana Chilton
US House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
March 13, 2007

110th Congress, Second Session
House Agriculture Committee

MAJORITY MEMBERS	AVERAGE % HOUSEHOLDS FOOD INSECURE (2003-5)	C-SNAP* FOOD INSECURE
Collin Peterson, MN *Chair*	7.1%	44.0% (Minneapolis)
Tim Holden, PA	8.3%	13.0% (Philadelphia)
Mike McIntyre, NC	9.8%	
Bob Etheridge, NC	9.8%	
Leonard Bowell, IA	9.5%	
Joe Baca, CA *Subcommittee Chair*	13.3%	20.0% (Los Angeles*)
Dennis Carodza, CA	13.3%	20.0% (Los Angeles*)
David Scott, GA	12.4%	
Jim Marshall, GA	12.4%	
Stephanie Herseth, SD	8.9%	
Henry Cuellar, TX	15.2%	
Jim Costa, CA	13.3%	20.0% (Los Angeles*)
John Salazar, CO	12.0%	
Brad Ellsworth, IN	11.1%	
Nancy Boyda, KS	11.5%	
Zach Space, OH	9.7%	
Tim Walz, MN	7.1%	
Kristen Gillibrand, NY	11.9%	
Steve Kagen, WI	8.5%	
Earl Pomeroy, ND	11.8%	
Lincoln David, TN	13%	
John Barrow, GA	12.4%	
Nick Lampson, TX	15.2%	
Joe Donnelly, IN	11.1%	
Tim Mahoney, FL	13.2%	
MINORITY MEMBERS		
Bob Goodlatte, VA *Ranking*	10.2%	
Terry Everett, AL	12.5%	
Frank Lucas, OK	14.6%	
Jerry Moran, KS	11.5%	
Robin Hayes, NC	9.8%	
Timothy Johnson, IL	7.9%	
Sam Graves, MO	10.1%	
Jo Bonner, AL *Subcommittee Ranking*	12.5%	
Mike Rogers, AL	12.5%	
Steve King, IA	9.5%	
Marily Musgrave, CO	12.0%	
Randy Neugebauer, TX	15.2%	
Charles Boustany, LA	14.4%	
Randy Kuhl, NY	10.4%	
Virginia Foxx, NC	9.8%	
Michael Conaway, TX	15.2%	
Jeff Fortenberry, NE	8.7%	
Jean Schmidt, OH	9.7%	
Adrian Smith, NE	8.7%	
Kevin McCarthy, CA	13.3%	20.0% (Los Angeles*)
Timothy Walberg, MI	9.6%	

* The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program has sites in the following states: Arkansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania Sites in California and Washington, D C. are dormant. Food insecurity rates reflect the problem among our study population, who are low-income, urban families

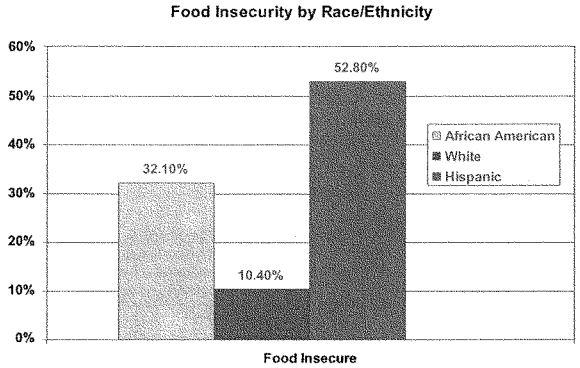
Food Insecurity in Minnesota C-SNAP Sample



Minnesota Food Stamp Overview

- 44% of C-SNAP families interviewed at Hennepin County Medical Center were food insecure.
- Food stamp participation is something that is very important to Minnesotans and has recently made the front pages of several local papers.
- Minnesota has several important barriers to Food stamp participation. The application is 22 pages long and monthly reporting is required, which are both substantial burdens and disincentives to participation.
- More than 40% of parents who use food pantries reported skipping meals sometimes.
- Food pantry usage over the past 5 years has doubled in some northern Minnesota areas and increased as much as 500% in some Twin Cities suburbs.
- Minnesota's economy lost $838 million in the past 6 years because of lack of food stamp use.
- Despite an outreach enrollment blitz for food stamps, the overall percentage of eligible people who are participating in food stamps has dropped from 73% to 59%.

Food Insecurity in Philadelphia C-SNAP Sample
Total Food Insecure in Sample: 13%



Philadelphia Food Stamp Overview

- 8.3% of Pennsylvanians were food insecure at some point during 2005.
- Food stamps bring an estimated quarter-billion dollars into the city of Philadelphia.
- Approximately 202,000 households with children received food stamps in 2004.
- In 2002, there were 133,000 households in Philadelphia that reported they did not eat because they did not have enough money.
- Within Philadelphia, there are approximately 22,979 eligible children aged 0-3 who DO NOT receive food stamps.
- In Philadelphia, only 44,605 families (25%) receive food stamps while 133,746 eligible families (74%) DO NOT receive food stamps.

NCLR
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

THE ABILITY OF THE FOOD STAMPS PROGRAM TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS FOR LATINO FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Submitted to:

Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture

Submitted by:

Janet Murguía
President and CEO

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA
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March 13, 2007

Representative Baca and Members of the Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify today. I am Janet Murguía, President and CEO of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1968 to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve opportunities for this nation's Hispanics.* As the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country and reaches millions each year through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations.

Over the past decade, NCLR has focused on improving the health status of Latinos to enable them to meet their full ability to pursue education and economic prospects. Given the high incidence of nutrition-related diseases affecting Latinos, NCLR works to increase Latino families' access to affordable and healthy foods. For example, nearly all immigrants were severely restricted from food stamps in 1996, and NCLR campaigned to restore eligibility to many legal immigrant households during the reauthorization of the 2002 Farm Bill. In December 2006, in an ongoing effort to bring more attention to food insecurity within the broader Latino community, NCLR released a research report entitled *Sin Provecho: Latinos and Food Insecurity*. The report profiled the impact of food insecurity and hunger among Latinos and the effectiveness of federal food assistance programs in improving nutritional status.

Background

The last decennial Census reported that from 1990 to 2000, the Latino community grew by almost 60%. Currently, there are more than 42 million Latinos in the U.S., constituting 14% of the total U.S. population.[1] While data show that the general U.S. population is aging, Latinos remain a relatively young group, with a median age just under 27 years old, compared to a median age of 36 years for the U.S. population.[2] Further, more than one in three (34%) Latinos is a child.

In addition, Latinos are a significant and growing part of the U.S. economy and maintain the highest labor force participation rate in the U.S. compared to their peers.[3] At the same time, incomes for Latinos continue to lag behind those of their counterparts. The typical weekly earnings of Hispanics who work full time ($489) are significantly lower than those of Blacks ($569) and only two-thirds of what Whites earn ($702).[4] In 2005, more than one in five (21.8%) Latinos was poor, facing numerous threats to well-being.[5] Latino families with children also are at high risk of experiencing poverty (24.4%). Insufficient economic resources are the most common reason for families being forced to make difficult choices about household expenses; food is often one of the first necessities to be compromised.

Given that Latinos are a relatively young and growing population, it is vitally important to invest in the appropriate supports to ensure that families can gain food security. Inadequate nutrition can deeply disrupt a person's life, be detrimental to a child's development, and ultimately leaves people ill-prepared for future opportunities in education, work, and many other aspects of their lives.

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* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to identify persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

The Effect of Food Insecurity in the Latino Community

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Hispanic household food insecurity rate (17.9%) is twice as high as the rate for non-Hispanic White households (8.2%), the most food secure.[6] In addition, Latino households with children have even higher rates of food insecurity; 21.6% of these households experience food insecurity compared to 11.8% of similar White households. Because of the dearth of resources in many Latino households, their ability to make food purchases is restricted. While the typical non-Hispanic White U.S. household spends $45 per person each week for food, Hispanic households spend 25% less, just $33 weekly per person.[7] Furthermore, food insecure Hispanic households typically do not spend enough to meet the minimum thresholds of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), the "bare bones" food plan designed by the USDA as a guide for families during food deficit emergencies.[8]

A survey in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that some of the consequences of food insecurity include "hunger pangs, fatigue, lack of concentration at school, low work capacity, stress, disrupted household dynamics, and distorted means of food acquisition and management."[9] Respondents to the survey reported "depression, increased need for health care, and decreased participation in social activities."[10]

Families will go to great lengths to keep their children from going hungry, which is why it is so alarming that many Latino children do not have adequate resources for a nutritious diet. Food insecure children are twice as likely to be in fair or poor health.[11] Further, a survey of parents of low-income, young Latino children who are food insecure found that they are two times more likely to note developmental concerns, including risks of developmental delays or disabilities, than households with children who have adequate resources for food.[12] Even small cognitive changes can have lasting impacts on a child's education. Even when a child experiences even mild levels of food insecurity, data suggest that school performance and social skills are comprised.[13]

There is also mounting evidence that the overweight and obesity trends in the United States are due, in part, to high levels of food insecurity.[14] The coping mechanisms associated with inadequate food resources – such as overeating when food is available, compromising the quality of food in order to consume higher quantities, and even skipping meals, which causes metabolic shifts – can result in a higher propensity for weight gain. While food insecurity persists in the Latino community, there is also a rising trend of obesity. One recent study found that among Latino preschoolers – children in the critical stages of growth – nearly one-quarter (24.4%) were identified as obese.[15]

Food insecurity also has a broader impact on society. The increased risk for and severity of sickness and disease that results from food insecurity can create a demand for more physician time, extensive levels of treatment, and greater rates of hospitalization – all of which require more money and resources. The health care costs associated with increased illness due to food insecurity not only fall on individuals who suffer from these effects, but ultimately add strain to the entire health care system.

The Food Stamp Program Provides Resources for Improved Nutrition
The Food Stamp Program has demonstrated great success in helping households to become more food secure and continues to be an important income supplement for families experiencing hardship. While overall prevalence of food insecurity with hunger is higher among food stamp participants than in nonparticipant households, food security rates among participants have increased at higher rates compared to those of nonparticipants.[16]

In addition, the educational benefits of participating in this program contribute to families achieving a higher level of nutrition. Food Stamp Program participants are more likely than low-income nonparticipants to lack confidence about their knowledge of good dietary practices and the quality of their diet. However, they benefit from nutrition education, which promotes consumption of healthier foods, a balanced diet, and physical activity. The results can be seen in the healthier choices they make in grocery stores.[17] Further, the education of adult participants is likely to have lasting impact on the younger family members, encouraging children to make healthy choices in and outside of the household. Although it is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between participation and health outcomes because of the added effects of the program on reducing poverty and improving socioeconomic status, data show that participants are able to make more deliberate choices that maximize the nutrition content of their food. In fact, despite rising obesity rates throughout the country for the population overall, women who participated in the Food Stamp Program from 1999 to 2002 were less likely to be overweight and were able to keep their weight relatively steady compared to nonparticipants.[18]

Although food security is heightened for families who receive food stamps, the benefit amount that is currently allotted does not allow most families to meet their full nutrition needs. For instance, a study carried out in Massachusetts found that families receiving the maximum food benefit would run significant budget deficits if purchasing the Thrifty Food Plan.[19] Further, more than eight in ten (84%) families participating in the Food Stamp Program have food stamp allotments that will not last more than three weeks.[20]

Latino Participation in the Food Stamp Program
Latinos are missing out on many of the Food Stamp Program's benefits because their rates of participation are lower than those of their White and Black counterparts. Although more than eight million Hispanics were eligible for the Food Stamp Program in 2004, only 51.5% of eligibles participated, compared to the participation rates of non-Hispanic Whites (57.7%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (73.1%). These data suggest that at least three million eligible Hispanic-headed households are not participating in the Food Stamp Program.[21]

Latinos continue to face a number of barriers that hinder their opportunity to participate in the program. In addition to the general administrative challenges that families face when trying to access the Food Stamp Program, Latinos encounter numerous deterrents that influence their willingness and ability to seek food assistance services. These barriers include a lack of culturally- and linguistically-appropriate outreach and information, decreased accessibility to food stamp offices, confusion regarding eligibility, and fear of reporting.

Further, although food stamp access was partially restored to immigrants in 2002, many who have arrived after August 22, 1996 face a series of complex rules. The restrictions expressly bar

the majority of adult immigrants from accessing the program simply due to their legal immigrant status for the first five years that they live in the U.S. While legal immigrant children and citizen children are fully eligible for food stamp benefits, many children in noncitizen families are being left behind due to these restrictions. The USDA reports that only half of eligible citizen children (51.5%) in noncitizen-headed households participate in the Food Stamp Program, far below the participation rate of all eligible children (81.5%).[22] With the exception of a small boost in participation rates after restorations were enacted in 2003, the gaps in participation for citizen children living in immigrant households have been largely consistent.

Farm Bill Reauthorization: Strengthening the Food Stamp Program
Although the Food Stamp Program plays a vital role in reducing hunger, improvements to the program would greatly help to diminish food insecurity. In particular, NCLR believes that the following policies are key to ensuring that low-income Latinos have a greater opportunity to achieve food security:

- *Restore full access to the Food Stamp Program for legal immigrants.* The 2002 Farm Bill ensured that many more lawfully-present immigrants were able to access the program and achieve greater food security. We can build upon this success by restoring access to the many immigrant households who remain ineligible. The Food Stamp Program should eliminate the complexity of these rules by ensuring equitable treatment of all lawfully-present immigrants. Taking this step will not only restore equity for lawfully-present immigrants, but also ensure that eligible family members, mainly children, will also seek participation in the program.

- *Increase outreach resources to improve enrollment of eligible Latinos.* NCLR recommends the establishment of targeted community-based outreach and enrollment programs that could be piloted in the Latino community. Latinos' participation in the Food Stamp Program remains low; only half (52.5%) of eligible Latinos receive assistance through the program. The USDA has been involved in outreach efforts; however, confusion and fear related to eligibility, distrust of and unfamiliarity with government systems, language barriers, and lower awareness of available resources all play a role in low participation. Latinos need to play a greater role at the community level, ensuring that those eligible are connected to the program. A proven successful practice of disseminating health-related materials in the Latino community is the use of lay health educators (*promotores de salud*), who often serve as a connector between Latinos and social service programs. Similarly, creating culturally- and linguistically-appropriate materials and programs for federal food assistance programs could be helpful in connecting eligible food insecure families to essential resources from federal agencies. NCLR recommends that the Farm Bill establish pilot programs that enable community-based organizations carry out outreach and enrollment activities.

- *Maintain entitlement structure of the Food Stamp Program.* Food stamps should be available to all families who are need-eligible. Food stamps have been very successful in alleviating food insecurity as they are able to adjust – expanding and contracting – to ensure that families can immediately access food. Restrictions that limit the capacity of the program, for instance, by capping enrollment or block granting the program, would be

detrimental. The entitlement structure allows the program to more effectively reach food insecure individuals and families in times of recession or when need increases unexpectedly.

- *Increase the food stamp benefit.* The value of food stamp benefits has declined over time for all participants. The minimum and maximum benefit level must be adjusted to reflect the fair cost of nutritious foods. The Thrifty Food Plan, which affords most families just one dollar per person for each meal, should be the *minimum* benefit for families. Otherwise, many of the poorest families will continue to find themselves cutting corners, often sacrificing the quality of food and nutritional content in order to stave off hunger.

Conclusion

Food insecurity is a real risk to Latino children's future prosperity and well-being, but it can be overcome by strengthening the food assistance network in the United States. During the reauthorization of the Farm Bill this year, there is an the opportunity to ensure that the Food Stamps program is more accessible for Latino families by simplifying laws related to legal immigrant eligibility and ensuring that families can navigate the enrollment process. Finally, the Food Stamp Program should provide practical levels of financial support needed for healthy food purchasing.

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Commissioner

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS, OVERSIGHT, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY

MARCH 13, 2007

Mother Teresa – in her Essential Wisdom – wrote, "I once picked up a small girl who was wandering the streets, lost. Hunger was written all over her face. Who knows how long it had been since she had eaten anything! I offered her a piece of bread. The little one started eating, crumb by crumb. I told her, 'Eat, eat the bread! Aren't you hungry?' She looked at me and said, 'I am just afraid that when I run out of bread, I'll still be hungry."

We know that Mother Teresa touched the lives of millions of children in India, here in the United States, and all around the world. Her story about the hungry little girl could be about a child in Calcutta, but sadly enough, it also could easily be about a child in Alabama. More specifically, a child in southwest Alabama, where I work and oversee the administration of the state's Food Stamp Program to the citizens of Baldwin County.

Baldwin County is the largest county geographically in Alabama, and is the second fastest growing in population. Our county is located on the Gulf of Mexico and is the largest county for tourist industry and potential jobs in this industry in the state. Many families and children benefit from the state's Food Stamp Program in Baldwin County. However, about six months ago, in studying the growth of our population, and from feedback from our state officials, we realized there were an unserved number of citizens whom we were failing to reach with the benefits of the program. We began an outreach program to better serve our citizens by working with our agency partners, the schools, our local staff in other programs, etc. to be sure applications were made available in various agencies and that people were assisted in completing the applications. In just a few short months, we were able to increase the county's participation by an additional 10%. We have continued to work toward our goals of reducing hunger and providing better nutrition for children and their families by these means, and other ideas we continue to explore. There is much more that needs to be done to further simplify the program in order to encourage more families with children to access the benefits.

From my twenty-eight (28) years of social work in Alabama, I come before you today to testify that the Food Stamp Program has been a God-send to many hungry children in our state. It is the largest benefit program in the Department of Human Resources. The program is designed to supplement the basic food needs of low-income households and our working poor. It also increases the family's food buying power, and improves the nutrition and health of many adults and children. We are all aware of the emphasis that is placed on healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. It is very important that our low-income families have access to programs that supplement their ability to make wise choices for their family and "put food on their table." Currently our state has nearly 514,000 people receiving benefits, and of this number over 278,000 are children, making them the largest population receiving food stamps in Alabama.

It is said repeatedly that our children, all across our nation, are our greatest resource. We have worked very hard in Alabama to make the needs of children a priority as evidenced by the many improvements in our child welfare programs over the past two decades. We realize the value of the Food Stamp Program as it helps to

contribute to family stability. The ability of a family to feed their children and provide proper nutrition to them keeps many families off the child welfare neglect rolls, thereby strengthening our families in Alabama.

The 2002 Farm Bill brought about significant, positive changes that improved and simplified the delivery of the Food Stamp Program to our citizens. However, there continue to be areas that need further strengthening.

Federal funding for the Food Stamp Program must keep pace with the daily increasing needs and the ever-increasing cost of providing a healthful diet for our families and our children. Also, funding for companion programs for education and nutrition should be increased. Including nutrition education as a viable program thrust has aided our families in Alabama tremendously by educating them on how to select healthy foods for themselves and their children. We applaud programs such as Team Nutrition, Program Nutrition Education, Eat Smart – Play Hard, School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, and many others as they support the goal of providing better nutrition for our children.

Many of you will recall the Hurricane of 1979 – Hurricane Frederick. I began my career seven weeks after Frederick hit the Alabama Gulf Coast. While I was assigned to the Child Welfare Program, I will never forget observing the greatest need of our citizens in rural southwest Alabama at that time – the need for food. Sure there were sheltering issues, job issues, financial issues, but the first and greatest need was the NEED FOR FOOD. Almost thirty years later, that basic need has not changed for our families and their children.

Chairman Baca, Congressman Bonner, and members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the Food Stamp Program and its impact on our children in ALABAMA.

RENE' M. MASSEY, BALDWIN COUNTY DIRECTOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

TESTIMONY OF GARY BRUNK

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members:

I come before you in the shadow of several Wheat State political leaders who have fought hunger over the last decades through the Food Stamp program.

No state has done more in the U.S. Congress to strengthen the Food Stamp Program, our nation's first line of defense against hunger.

Senator Bob Dole, one of the principle architects of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, took a program that existed largely as an add-on to public assistance and opened it to the working poor, the temporarily unemployed, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Representative Keith Sebelius helped craft the House version of Senator Dole's legislation.

Representative Dan Glickman helped write important legislation that protected and strengthened the program.

And in the mid-1990s then-Representative Pat Roberts led an effort to preserve the integrity of the program's structure. Later, as Senator, he worked to restore food stamp cuts made in 1996 that he believed went too far.

Historians among you will note that Kansas' food stamp champions came from both political parties. That too is a legacy of Senator Dole, who in the late 70's worked with Democratic Senator George McGovern to improve the food stamp law.

Their bipartisan friendship continued when, in 2005, Dole, McGovern and Donald E. Messer, a Methodist theologian, wrote Ending Hunger Now: A Challenge to Persons of Faith. The book mentions that the senators also collaborated to champion school lunch programs and supplemental nutrition programs for women, infants and children.

The authors give an important clue about the values that brought them together in this book. "Every religious tradition," they write, "emphasizes caring for children."

The connection Senators Dole and McGovern make between caring for children and eliminating hunger explain why, as director of a Kansas child advocacy organization, I am here.

Let me tell you about children in Kansas today. In many ways Kansas is a terrific place to be a child. Year in and year out we do well in cross-state comparisons of child well-being. Kansas ranks 12th in that regard, according to the KIDS COUNT Data Book, a widely used compilation of statistics about children.

Whenever I talk about how we rank, I immediately follow with two very large "howevers."

The first "however" is that we've achieved our high ranking in comparison to states within a nation that does not itself compare well with most other industrialized nations. For example, as regards childhood poverty, the United States compares poorly with the world's economically developed nations.

My second "however" is that we need always remember that no matter where our state places in a ranking, a significant number of Kansas children live with economic insecurity. And the odds are stacked against them.

Of all our children, 14.6 percent live in families with incomes below the poverty level. Another 20 percent live in families with incomes below 200 percent of poverty. City setting or countryside, it makes little difference. The child poverty rate in thinly settled Kansas "frontier counties" is about the same as in urban areas—15 percent. Densely settled rural counties fare worst, with poverty affecting about 17 percent of their children.

One of the consequences of poverty is that about 12 percent of Kansas households—133,000—are food insecure, meaning that their lack of resources makes them uncertain about access to food. For many of the children in these families, food stamps are the most important protection from persistent hunger. In Kansas, 183,000 persons depend on Food Stamps and almost half of them are children. Of those children, 76,000 live in poverty, 41,000 in extreme poverty.

Of course when I say the Food Stamp Program protects thousands of Kansas children from hunger I'm talking about more than the discomfort or pain that comes of missing meals, bad as those consequences are.

Others appearing at this hearing can speak with more authority about the radiant effects of hunger. A brief summary would note that hungry children are more likely to have behavioral and emotional problems. They are less likely to perform well in school. Hungry children are more likely to struggle with obesity. They are less likely to be in the full bloom of health.

The effects of hunger are especially devastating for small children. Brain and child development research has focused increasing attention on life's earliest years. When things go right, this is a period of phenomenal cognitive and physical growth

that lays the foundation for successful adulthood. When things go wrong, the foundation is weakened, and the negative consequences multiply.

Children for whom much has gone wrong are likely to start behind their peers and to stay there.

The trickle-down of poverty and hunger acts, cumulatively, like a slow poison. Food stamps help protect against that poison. The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C–SNAP) calls the Food Stamp program "one of America's best medicines" because the nutrition it provides improve children's health, decreases hospitalizations, and optimizes mental, social and emotional development.

I come to you today with a sense of urgency about keeping the Kansas medicine chest stocked with the remedy we call food stamps. In my view, it is imperative that Congress strengthen the nutrition title of the Farm Bill by improving the food stamp program.

The number of food stamp recipients in the Wheat State has grown by more than 50,000 in five years. My friends at the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Wichita, who served around 6,500 clients in 2001, tell me that the number was 10,500 four years later. People come to them once a month to take away a supply of food good for two or three days. Increasing numbers of these folks, I'm told, are working-poor families. This reflects the inadequate levels of benefits provided in the Food Stamp program.

That leads me to four recommendations for strengthening the Food Stamp Program.

The first is this. I'd like to encourage improving the food stamp benefit. In Kansas, the benefit is 95 cent per person per meal. How can that level of benefit purchase an adequate diet, given other claims on household income? It's not enough for basics, let alone a healthy nutritious diet. But not only is the benefit level insufficient, for many families it is actually eroding.

As a result of benefit cuts enacted as part of the 1996 welfare law, the purchasing power of most households' food stamp benefit is eroding in value each year. Food Stamp Program budget calculations allow households to subtract a "standard deduction" from their income, to reflect the basic costs of housing, utilities, transportation, and other inescapable living expenses. The standard deduction represents a portion of household income that is not available to purchase food because it must be used for other necessities.

Prior to 1996, the standard deduction was indexed each year to account for inflation, in recognition of the fact that basic living expenses rise with inflation. The 1996 welfare law, however, froze the standard deduction at $134 for all household sizes. In the 2002 Farm Bill, Congress improved the standard deduction to help address the needs of larger households. The standard deduction remains frozen at $134 a month, however, for households with three or fewer members.

In 2008, food stamp benefits for a typical working parent with two children will be about $37 a month lower than they would have been without the across-the-board benefit cuts included in the 1996 law. That is 13 million dollars less for Kansans to spend on food in FY2008 alone, and 168 million dollars in lost benefits between FY2008 and FY2017. By 2017, a typical working parent of two will, over the course of a year, miss out on more than one and a half months-worth of food stamps, compared to the amount of benefits she or he would have received under the law in place prior to 1996. Under current rules, this lost ground will never be recovered.

To restore the purchasing power of food stamp benefits, the standard deduction needs to be raised from $134 to $188 in 2008 and annually adjusted for inflation. A typical household of three or fewer members would see its benefits increase by about $24 a month. This would not restore benefits to the levels they would have been without the 1996 law because of the cut in the maximum benefit, but much of the lost ground would be recovered. I realize that this would be very expensive, but even a partial fix would make a big difference to people trying to put food on the table.

One way to begin stopping the erosion of benefits is to improve the proposal enacted in 2002 and raise the standard deduction from 8.31 percent of the poverty line to 10 percent, as the Administration proposed in 2002. This would increase benefits right away for households of three or more people. Going from 8.31% to 10% would mean that in FY17 a typical working household of 3 would have about $11 more per month (in real terms) than it would have received under current law. Households of two would start to see an increase ten years earlier than under current law. Virtually all of the increased benefits in the first five years would go to families with children. (Over time, households of one and two would benefit as well.) At a minimum, Congress should ensure that benefits don't continue to erode in value. The problem should stop in 2007.

Secondly, only about two out of three of those who are eligible for food stamps in Kansas are getting them. It's not just working-poor families who are eligible but not receiving them, but legal immigrants and seniors, too. I hope your committee will look for ways to simplify and streamline enrollment so state agencies can serve eligible households.

The 2002 farm bill reduced paperwork and office-visit requirements for working-poor households. The same allowance should be made for households that include elderly or disabled members. The 2002 provision that allowed people to apply for the food stamp program over the Internet should be expanded so that they also can apply by telephone. Finally, Congress should give states the ability to coordinate food stamps with other programs that support those with low income, as well as supporting state efforts to use technology improvements and business models to help with program access and to realize administrative savings.

Third, I would like to endorse a proposal in the President's budget: adjusting food stamps more accurately to reflect high child care costs. Tens of thousands of working families in Kansas do not have child care subsidies and have to pay out of pocket for child care cost. The Administration's proposal would allow working families with high child care costs to deduct the full cost of that care from households' income when determining their food stamp benefits. Right now that amount is capped at $160 per month per child for children over 2 ($200 per month per child for younger children.) This proposal helps those families with child care costs above those amounts.

The choice of paying for food or buying safe quality child care for your kids is no choice that a working poor parent should have to make. This proposal won't fully fix the problem of too little funding for child care, but it will ease the ripple effects of that serious problem.

Finally, I'd urge you to expanding access to legal immigrants and poor households that have modest savings. The legal bar facing these parents now has implications for children born citizens here. Please note that 16% of children under 150% of poverty in Kansas have an immigrant parent. Serving these children and their families is critical to a comprehensive solution to child poverty in Kansas.

I believe stopping the erosion of benefits, simplifying enrollment, making adjustments for child care costs, and expanding access moves us closer to the goal of eliminating hunger in America. On this committee are two Kansans, Representative Moran and Representative Boyda, a Republican and a Democrat.

My challenge to them is to emulate the bi-partisan example set by Senators Dole and McGovern in the fight against hunger. That is also my challenge to all of you.

TESTIMONY OF KIM MCCOY WADE

I'm Kim McCoy Wade, Executive Director of the California Association of Food Banks, and I represent 40 food banks united to build a well-nourished California. Our 40 community food banks partner with a network of 5,000 charities and congregations to serve over 2 million Californians in need of food.

Forty years ago in Texas, my mom graduated with a college degree in home economics and followed a call from President Johnson to enlist as a VISTA volunteer. She soon found herself living in Newark, New Jersey, where her new job was to teach moms how to use food stamps to shop and prepare healthy food for their families. Of course, as a VISTA volunteer, she also was living on food stamps herself, and found that first-hand experience more educational than anything she had learned in home economics. The women in her classes taught her how to stretch peanut butter into soups to last through the month.

In California, just as in Texas and New Jersey, food stamps are the ultimate, if unsung, nutrition program for children. Food stamps can serve every child, of every age, on every day of the year, school day or not. Because of food stamps' creation 40 years ago, it's rare to find a starving child in America—and for that accomplishment we can all be proud and protective. Two million people now receive food stamps in California each month, and 2 out of 3 are children. Ninety percent are families with children. These 1.3 million children, like all participants, receive around $100 per month for their parents to spend on food at the grocery store. For states, this provides tremendous economic activity: more than $2 billion is spent on food in California alone, generating $3.7 billion in economic impact. For parents, it's a simpler equation: food stamps prevent them from sending their children to bed hungry or off to school unprepared to learn.

While we can be proud that child starvation is largely a thing of the past in America, what, is far too common still is children eating oatmeal every night for dinner because the money has just run out. Families everywhere are struggling to afford

housing, health care, and all the basic costs of raising kids today. Often, the first place that gets squeezed is the family food budget. Many kids end up with oatmeal—or other very low-cost, low-quality foods—for dinner because the food stamps they receive do not go far enough. Healthy food is expensive, with fruits and vegetables costing more than more processed foods, according to research from Adam Drewnowski at the University of Washington. Food stamps' average benefit of $1 per meal helps fill the plate, but isn't enough to truly nourish a child. One youth in Georgia, whose soccer team was recently featured on the front page of the New York Times, held his stomach and told his coach that he was hungry. When the coach said he could have a snack at home, he told her he couldn't because there was no food at home—it was the end of the month when the food stamps run out. That story matches food bank survey data finding that food stamps tend to last only 2 weeks of the month.

Even worse, there are millions of poor children who don't get any food from the Food Stamp Program, because of the bureaucratic hurdles in their way. Only half of all eligible families participate in food stamps in California (46%)—and even fewer of our eligible working families (36%). More and more, the typical family eligible for food stamps is not unemployed or relying solely upon public assistance. Instead, they are working families and they are having tremendous difficulty navigating the system on their own. Some of these families give up because of state and local barriers that we are working to overcome with outreach, innovation, and advocacy. Nationally, however, we need Congressional leadership to continue to focus on making food stamps really work for kids and parents. As one example, "categorical eligibility," which has helped boost participation in our neighbor state of Oregon to 80%, should not be eliminated as a State option, as the President's budget proposed.

Why do the California food bank network and food banks around the country care so much about children and food stamps? Quite simply, because our mission is to end hunger in America, and we know we can't do it alone. The Food Stamp Program provides 8 times the amount of food that the charitable food network in America does, according to America's Second Harvest: the Nation's Food Bank Network. The new debit card system efficiently delivers benefits to families, which are then spent in the local grocery stores for foods that families choose to meet their health, cultural, and dietary needs. We especially need the Food Stamp Program to be strong, because when it is weak, families lean more on food banks and our tremendous network of charities, congregations, and volunteers. Food banks aim to promote and partner with the Food Stamp Program—not replace it.

For all these reasons, food banks in California have taken the lead to connect families to food stamps through a partnership with USDA and the California Health and Human Services Agency. Our Association has contracted with 48 food banks and other community groups in 22 counties to target 135,000 people this year with information and assistance on food stamps. In communities across the state, food banks are taking a comprehensive approach to ending hunger that integrates three goals: providing healthy emergency food, especially California-grown fruits and vegetables; promoting nutrition education to encourage healthy food choices; and connecting people to food stamps so they are able to purchase the food they need. Statewide, we have also helped pilot a state hotline, on-line applications, and a web resource center, *www.myfoodstamps.org*. We are determined to move California from its current last place ranking among the states for food stamp participation.

Our work on the front lines with children in need of food has shown us both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Food Stamp Program, and what's needed to deliver good nutrition to all children:

1. Enough money to buy healthy food all month long

Families now receive less in food stamps than they did 10 years ago. The typical working family of 3 will receive over $400 less this year—and that loss is growing with each passing year. That's a particularly discouraging number to food bankers. Assuming we provide a family with a box of food worth roughly $35 each month, that's about the same as the $400 lost annually from food stamps. That's not progress in reducing hunger, that's just passing the buck. This loss of food dollars is a direct result of a freeze in the food stamp standard deduction enacted in 1996. Over the next 10 years, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that California families on food stamps will receive $1.6 billion less than they would have had the 1996 cut not been enacted. Our food banks can't and shouldn't have to try to fill that difference. This lost ground in the fight against hunger can be regained by Congress focusing first on restoring food stamp benefit levels.

An adequate monthly food budget, coupled with positive nutrition education, is what children and families need to get the healthy food they need. The minimum benefit of $10 that many of our seniors receive needs to be increased, too (and Cali-

fornia needs specific assistance to fix our unique rules prohibiting food stamps for seniors and disabled children and adults receiving SSI.)

2. Food for all people in need

The Food Stamp Program used to ask only if you were poor and needed food—and that's the right question. Now, there are different and complicated rules for immigrant families, unemployed adults without children, and certain ex-offenders. California is feeling the affects of this patchwork right now in our recent citrus freeze. Many newly unemployed farm workers are not turning to food stamps to help feed their children—either because they are not eligible or are confused about the different eligibility rules—and instead are coming to community food banks that now need additional freeze relief to meet the need. Currently, adult legal immigrants are generally not eligible for federal food stamps during their first five years in the country and then face complicated and intimidating rules after that period. All legal immigrants should be made eligible for the program. It's the right thing to do and it would have the added benefit of dramatically simplifying the program in California. Children in immigrant homes are hurt by program rules that feed some people in need, and not others.

A second group of people who can't get food is people with savings. Surely children need parents to be saving for a security deposit for an apartment, for their tuition, or for the next rainy day when someone's sick or the car breaks down. But families can't get food stamps if they have more than $2000 in the bank. Don't let family savings be a barrier to family nutrition: eliminate the asset test.

No red tape

Only about ⅓ of food bank clients are receiving food stamps, though many more are likely eligible, according to America's Second Harvest. Through food banks' outreach to our clients, we have found that long waits, repetitive paperwork, and outdated finger imaging requirements all prevent families from completing the application process. One California study documented that it takes an average of 2 trips to the food stamp office to successfully submit an application. Working families could particularly benefit from food stamps' power to boost their wages, but half don't apply because of red tape that means too much bureaucracy and not enough help. Partly as a result of this frustration, as many as half of the people food banks now serve are working families, according to several California food banks' 2006 Hunger Studies.

Even sophisticated outreach efforts will not achieve increased participation if not coupled with innovations that allow families to get food stamps in places outside the county welfare office—including on-line and at schools, medical centers, and food banks. The Electronic Benefit Transfer card that resulted from the 1996 farm bill was a great step to modernize the program. Congress should demonstrate similar ingenuity in this year's Farm Bill by continuing to invest in technology, combined applications, a new name, and other common-sense steps to simplify this process, while of course still preserving integrity.

Another essential part of the Food Stamp Program is Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE). At 14 food banks in California and throughout the country, FSNE projects are working to help low-income families achieve nutrition goals consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. By empowering children—and their parents—to make healthy choices, these programs can bring about positive lifestyle changes and especially increased fruit and vegetable consumption. But we can do more to unlock the potential of FSNE programs, to strengthen their ability to reduce hunger, and to help avoid costly health disparities such as obesity and type 2 diabetes. The Farm Bill provides an opportunity to modernize FSNE, to ensure that state and local programs can utilize evidence driven public health interventions that reach current and potentially-eligible food stamp recipients in multiple venues where they live, work, go to school, worship, and make their food and physical activity choices.

The Food Stamp Program isn't the only nutrition program that food banks directly work with. We also partner with USDA to distribute emergency food, through both the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEF AP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Alarmingly, these emergency food programs are now serving fewer people in California than in recent years, despite increased need and their benefit to both families and the agricultural sector. In California, TEFAP and bonus commodities are down from 97 million pounds in 2002 to 57 million pounds in 2006. CSFP, which serves mainly seniors, cut 5,000 people last year in California and is again proposed for elimination in the President's budget. Both programs deserve significant, additional investment in food purchase to feed the people food banks serve every day.

Finally, I have one last message on children's health and nutrition: this year, you are going to be presented with a lot of appealing new ideas around nutrition. I am hopeful that there is the opportunity and the funding available to explore many of these proposals. However, I also urge you to keep focused on what is our largest and most successful US nutrition program, preventing severe hunger and boosting nutrition for millions of children nationwide: the Food Stamp Program. Twenty four million Americans count on food stamps today, and another 20 million in need are counting on us to make sure the program will also work for them.

There's a reason the National Journal recently ranked the Food Stamp Program as one of the top 10 American success stories. Children displaced by Katrina received food stamps. Teenagers with their growing appetites use food stamps. Infants—like my one year old son, just trying fruits and vegetables for the first time—participate in food stamps. All of these children are now relying on all of us adults to help them get the food they need to grow, learn, and thrive. Thank you for taking up that challenge.

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