

An Open Letter to the Missouri Congressional Delegation

Dear Senators and Representatives of the Missouri Delegation:

All of the Missouri organizations noted thank you for the work you do for the people of Missouri. We urge you to support efforts to strengthen and protect federal nutrition programs against any eligibility restrictions, benefit cuts or change to the structure of our safety net programs in 2017 and beyond.

There are far too many people in this country struggling with hunger – 42 million Americans, including 13 million children. USDA's Economic Research Service reports that that 15.2% of Missourians suffer from food insecurity, meaning that members of 368,600 Missouri households struggle to get the nutritious food they need. Government and private programs prevent hunger, but our local food pantries and congregate meal programs report they are already at or beyond capacity. They will be unable to respond adequately to any cuts to these federal nutrition programs.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves Missourians of all ages, while the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant and Children (WIC), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) feed our youngest and oldest neighbors. Together these federal nutrition programs have proven, cost-effective track records spanning generations of Missouri families.

Effective Federal Anti-Hunger Programs Should Be Strengthened

- Nutrition and health safety net programs protect hundreds of thousands of Missourians from the long-lasting harm of living in poverty. These programs largely serve working families and are the most effective tools at preventing devastating health consequences that stem from hunger.
- Federal anti-hunger programs are most important during economic downturns, a lesson we learned during the Great Recession. Trimming and undermining federal anti-hunger benefits weakens the ability of the programs to respond to recessionary times.
- Federal anti-hunger programs not only help the individuals and families on the program but also communities through increased economic activity. USDA research shows that each \$5 of federal SNAP/Food Stamp benefits generates nearly twice that in economic activity.

It is important to remember that even now, as our economy recovers, SNAP benefits ring over \$1 billion a year through Missouri cash registers. Federal anti-hunger programs are essential, not only to prevent hunger and some of the worst outcomes of poverty, but also for communities – and retailers— who depend on shoppers paying for groceries with SNAP when their income falls short.

This is why in this upcoming year, we are calling upon you, our Missouri Congressional Delegation, to act to strengthen, not weaken, our nation's core anti-hunger programs. These critical programs are based upon deep and long-standing bipartisan support - rooted in the notion that no one in our nation should go hungry. We each stand ready to work with you to achieve this goal.

For more information about this statement, contact: Jeanette Mott Oxford, Executive Director, Empower Missouri: jeanette@empowermissouri.org or 573-634-2901, x 301.

Organizational Signatures