



July 23, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development and International Justice and Peace, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Rural Life, we wish to address the moral and human dimensions of FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations. The nation's priorities must include robust funding for both domestic and international food aid, and conservation and rural development programs, while resisting harmful cuts. Many of these program areas have already been subject to reductions over time. Further cuts would be detrimental to vulnerable people and communities.

In *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*, the U.S. bishops wrote, "The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad." Adequate nutrition is essential to protect human life and dignity. We must also promote good stewardship of the land and natural resources. In our soup kitchens and parish food pantries, we see the faces of poor and hungry people every day both domestically and internationally. As a faith community, we feed those without work, pregnant women and children, and seniors on limited incomes across the globe. With more than 41 million (1 in 8) living in food insecure households in the U.S. alone, our nation needs to prioritize programs that assist poor and hungry people and promote good stewardship.

In addition to refraining from making cuts that impact programs like SNAP, which provide greater levels of food security to millions of people, it is vital to provide robust funding for the following domestic programs:

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Maintain minimum funding for WIC at the FY 2018 Senate Appropriations Committee passed \$6.35 billion level, ensuring that all qualified families have access to life saving nutritional and health services. Provide investments in technology to improve program operations and preparing for economic volatility to sustain increased enrollment.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): Provide full funding levels as required by the 2014 Farm Bill for TEFAP and food distribution grants in local communities which allow for significant funding increases in FY 2019. TEFAP is the backstop for food security in communities across the country providing roughly 20% of food distributed by local hunger-relief organizations in 2017.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): For 50 years CACFP has supplemented the diets of vulnerable Americans by providing nutritious meals and snacks. It is imperative to increase funding for CACFP to continue supporting the health and wellness of the over 4 million Americans this program serves.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): Fully fund the CSFP to ensure adequate food assistance is provided to the growing population of low-income seniors. Faith communities and other charities are essential in providing food packages to hungry seniors in their local communities. As the population continues to age, our ministries are experiencing increasing demand for food services from seniors that must be addressed.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): Provide adequate funding for CSP to help farmers better conserve and care for farm land for future generations. Strong conservation programs are necessary to promote good stewardship of creation and provide needed support to family farms.

Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG): Maintain current funding for the VAPG program to help farmers and ranchers innovate new farm and food-related businesses to increase rural economic opportunity and assist farm and ranch families to thrive.

We also ask you to prioritize international food security programs. The Administration has proposed cutting all funding for the Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, and Food for Progress programs. We strongly oppose this decision and ask that Congress maintain their support for these programs.

International Food Assistance Funding: We appreciate the Senate's continued commitment to international food assistance programs, including Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole, as demonstrated in the FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill. With unprecedented food emergencies in places like East Africa, the Lake Chad Basin, and Yemen remaining, these programs continue to save the lives of millions, and are helping still millions more to lead productive lives. We support the Senate's FY 2019 funding levels for these programs, including \$1.716 billion for Food for Peace and \$210.6 million for McGovern-Dole. While not mentioned in the FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we strongly support continued funding of Food for Peace "non-emergency" programs at the minimum funding level of \$350 million required by the Farm Bill. These non-emergency programs build resilience, strengthen agricultural capacity, and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable, reducing the need to provide future emergency assistance.

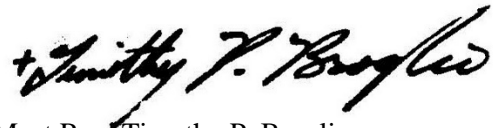
McGovern-Dole Local Purchase: Maintain language that allows \$15 million of McGovern-Dole resources to be used to carry out local purchase programming that supports contributions from local farmers to school feeding programs. Shifting funding for this purpose will help improve the long-term sustainability of school feeding.

At a time of continuing budgetary constraints and competition for agricultural resources, the needs of those who are hungry, poor and vulnerable should come before assistance to those who are relatively well off. With other Christian leaders, we urge the committee to draw a "circle of protection" around programs that serve those in greatest need and to prioritize their needs first. We urge you to protect and fund programs that feed hungry people, help the most vulnerable farmers, strengthen rural communities and promote good stewardship of God's creation.

Sincerely yours,



Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Mr. Sean Callahan
President
Catholic Relief Services



Mr. James Ennis
Executive Director
Catholic Rural Life



July 23, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development and International Justice and Peace, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Rural Life, we wish to address the moral and human dimensions of FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations. The nation's priorities must include robust funding for both domestic and international food aid, and conservation and rural development programs, while resisting harmful cuts. Many of these program areas have already been subject to reductions over time. Further cuts would be detrimental to vulnerable people and communities.

In *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*, the U.S. bishops wrote, "The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad." Adequate nutrition is essential to protect human life and dignity. We must also promote good stewardship of the land and natural resources. In our soup kitchens and parish food pantries, we see the faces of poor and hungry people every day both domestically and internationally. As a faith community, we feed those without work, pregnant women and children, and seniors on limited incomes across the globe. With more than 41 million (1 in 8) living in food insecure households in the U.S. alone, our nation needs to prioritize programs that assist poor and hungry people and promote good stewardship.

In addition to refraining from making cuts that impact programs like SNAP, which provide greater levels of food security to millions of people, it is vital to provide robust funding for the following domestic programs:

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We also ask you to prioritize international food security programs. The Administration has proposed cutting all funding for the Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, and Food for Progress programs. We strongly oppose this decision and ask that Congress maintain their support for these programs.

International Food Assistance Funding: We appreciate the House's continued commitment to international food aid programs in their Agriculture Appropriations bill, including Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole, and Food for Progress. With unprecedented food emergencies in places like East Africa, the Lake Chad Basin, and Yemen remaining, these programs continue to save the lives of millions, and are helping still millions more to lead productive lives. We urge the House to appropriate the maximum amount of funding possible to these programs.

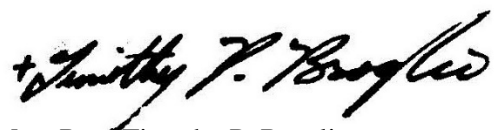
International Food Assistance Directives: The House FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill includes two important directives related to international food security programs. First, the House bill reiterates the 2014 Farm Bill requirement that a minimum of \$350 million of Food for Peace resources must be used in "non-emergency programs" that build resilience, strengthen agricultural capacity, and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable. The House bill also provides a one-time additional appropriation of \$20 million for overseas transportation of commodities in the Food for Progress program, which will result in more funding for programs that help small farmers better participate in markets and become more self-reliant. We ask that the House please support both of these provisions in the final FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

At a time of continuing budgetary constraints and competition for agricultural resources, the needs of those who are hungry, poor and vulnerable should come before assistance to those who are relatively well off. With other Christian leaders, we urge the committee to draw a "circle of protection" around programs that serve those in greatest need and to prioritize their needs first. We urge you to protect and fund programs that feed hungry people, help the most vulnerable farmers, strengthen rural communities and promote good stewardship of God's creation.

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