

**St. Louis Area Foodbank Response
to Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Passage of 2018 Farm Bill
June 20, 2018**



On June 13, 2018 the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry passed its draft of the 2018 Farm Bill. The St. Louis Area Foodbank, along with Feeding America, our fellow food banks, and anti-hunger advocates across the country, applauds the Senate for producing and advancing a bipartisan bill which protects SNAP and upholds this nation's long-held commitment to addressing domestic hunger.

The Senate bill rightly affirms what those of us on the front-lines of the fight against hunger know and see every day: that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of our nation's anti-hunger efforts, that it works, and that it is a program worth thoughtful investment and improvement. The Senate bill acknowledges that SNAP already contains provisions designed to encourage work and carefully addresses barriers many vulnerable populations face in securing work by extending programs and funding aimed at connecting people to employment *without* threatening individuals' access to essential resources. This bill also includes promising reforms focused on improving and strengthening the program through sensible partnerships and technological innovation.

For every meal one of Feeding America's 200 food banks, like the St. Louis Area Foodbank, provides, SNAP provides twelve. Its impact on our nation's hungry and its critical place in our country's broader anti-hunger efforts simply cannot be overstated. And while the bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee (H.R.2) proposed drastic changes that would result in indiscriminate cuts to SNAP, the Senate bill safeguards access to the benefits upon which millions of children, veterans, workers, disabled people, and older adults rely. For this the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry should be commended.

However, we do see the bill's investment in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) as a missed opportunity, and we strongly encourage the Senate to reconsider the bill's more modest funding proposal and include additional funds to strengthen this vital program. TEFAP improves the charitable sector's ability to respond to hunger locally, providing food banks with nutritious, USDA commodities which go on to fill the shelves of neighborhood food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. In fact, TEFAP accounted for roughly 16% of the 43.5 million pounds of food the St. Louis Area Foodbank distributed in the last fiscal year, exemplifying how programs that connect partners in the fight against hunger makes our collective work that much more effective.

At the St. Louis Area Foodbank we strive for a healthier region where no one goes to bed hungry. Together – with the government's partnership and with strong programs like SNAP and TEFAP – we can make that vision a reality by making a real difference in the lives of those facing hunger. We urge the Senate to take this opportunity to support a Farm Bill that does just that by protecting and supporting programs like SNAP and TEFAP. We remain eager and committed to continuing to work with our community partners and elected officials to that end for a brighter, healthier future for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meredith Knopp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Meredith Knopp
CEO, St. Louis Area Foodbank