

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 14, 2011

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you today to ask you to join me in the fight to save critical anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs, particularly the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), by signing the following letter to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction.

Nationwide, according to the Census Bureau, real median household income in the United States in 2010 was \$49,445, a 2.3 percent decline from the 2009 median. The nation's official poverty rate in 2010 was 15.1 percent, up from 14.3 percent in 2009 — the third consecutive annual increase in the poverty rate. There were 46.2 million people in poverty in 2010, up from 43.6 million in 2009 — the fourth consecutive annual increase and the largest number in the 52 years for which poverty estimates have been published. 49 million people live in food insecure households, according to USDA and the Census Bureau. These statistics mean that every day Americans find themselves without enough food to feed their families. Programs like SNAP are a backbone of the safety net that helps the neediest American families afford to buy food.

According to the Center for American Progress (CAP), hunger costs our nation at least \$167.5 billion annually due to lost economic productivity each year, avoidable health care costs, and the cost of charity to keep families fed. Programs like SNAP have been proven to lift families out of food insecurity and above the poverty line, meaning it is both an immediate lifeline for families in need and can be part of a long-term solution in fighting poverty and hunger.

The letter will be open for signature until October 27, 2011. Please feel free to contact me or my Legislative Assistant, Kathryn Tanner (kathryn_tanner@gillibrand.senate.gov or 4-9408), if you have any questions or if you would like to sign onto this letter.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

October xx, 2011
The Honorable xxx
U.S. Senate/Member of Congress
Xxx Office Building
Washington, DC 205xx

Dear xxx,

We write to you as a member/chair of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to implore you to protect our nation's anti-hunger programs. Specifically, we ask that you not find cost savings in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) since this program is a true safety net for America's lowest income and neediest families. If this critical lifeline is not protected, more children, seniors, low-income working parents and unemployed people will go hungry.

Last December, the President's bi-partisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform developed deficit reduction recommendations to reduce the federal deficit without cutting funding for anti-hunger programs. The Commission's final recommendations for deficit reduction totaling \$4 trillion over 10 years made no cuts to our nation's nutrition programs such as SNAP and the child nutrition programs. Similarly, the Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Six" deficit reduction plan also totaled \$4 trillion over 10 years without cutting into SNAP or any other critical anti-hunger programs. In fact, the "Gang of Six" plan explicitly precluded the Agriculture Committee from cutting SNAP funding when making deficit reduction recommendations.

There has never been a more important time to protect SNAP, the critical anti-hunger program that makes sure that all Americans in need can have food on their dinner tables. Millions of individuals and families continue to struggle with poverty and hunger. There were 46.2 million people in poverty in 2010, up from 43.6 million in 2009 — the fourth consecutive annual increase and the largest number in the 52 years for which poverty estimates have been published. 49 million people live in food insecure households, according to USDA and the Census Bureau. These statistics mean that every day Americans find themselves without enough food to feed their families. SNAP saves families from going hungry.

In addition to lifting families out of poverty and keeping children from going hungry, SNAP offers a stimulus to local economies. USDA reports that for every SNAP dollar spent, there is a \$1.79 return to the economy.

The deficit reduction plan should not—and need not--increase hunger and poverty.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,