

August 7, 2024

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,  
and Forestry  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Glenn “G.T.” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,  
and Forestry  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20510

Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott,

We, the undersigned national organizations, urge you to take meaningful action to resolve food insecurity among military families in the next Farm Bill. Specifically, Congress must take urgent action to exclude a servicemember’s Basic Allowance for Housing as income in determining their eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure that all those in need can access this critical nutrition program.

SNAP serves over 40 million food insecure Americans every day. Among those seeking help to keep food on the table are military personnel. Already having sacrificed so much, too many are struggling to feed themselves and their families. Currently serving members of the Armed Forces — often junior enlisted (typically enlisted ranks E-1 through E-4) with dependents — have turned in desperation to emergency assistance for years, making ends meet with the help of the food pantries that operate on or near every military installation in the United States.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service,<sup>1</sup> using data from the U.S. Department of Defense, the prevalence of food insecurity is 2.5 times higher among the active-duty military population compared with a demographically and economically equivalent civilian population of adults. The study found that more than 25 percent of active-duty military personnel are food insecure, compared with only about 10 percent of adult civilians. Additionally, one in 10 active-duty servicemembers and their families skip meals or eat less because of financial stress.

Congress must acknowledge that the face of America’s military has changed. In recent decades, the demographic make-up of the military’s enlisted personnel has shifted from predominantly single, 18-year-old men to a much more diverse force. Today’s military is composed of

---

<sup>1</sup> Rabbitt, M.P., & Beymer, M.R. (2024). *Comparing food insecurity among the U.S. military and civilian adult populations* (Report No. ERR-331). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://doi.org/10.32747/2024.8374828.ers>

individuals representing a wide array of gender, socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds,<sup>2</sup> including much higher rates of individuals who are supporting families than previous cohorts of servicemembers.<sup>3</sup> However, military compensation policy has not adequately kept pace with the changing demographics and needs of enlisted servicemembers, nor with the cost of living. Furthermore, military lifestyles impose unique costs and challenges, which are often exacerbated for junior-enlisted, low-ranking, and low-paid servicemembers with families.

Federal nutrition safety net programs like SNAP exist to help families like these, but tens of thousands of servicemembers are blocked from accessing them because of a flaw in the eligibility calculation that treats the military housing allowance as income.

For servicemembers who receive a housing allowance, that allowance is currently counted as income for the purpose of determining SNAP eligibility. This is a troubling inconsistency, as these stipends are not counted as taxable income by the IRS and for other federal aid programs. By making this simple change in the Farm Bill and excluding a servicemember's housing allowance as income, you change the lives of low-income military families who have been erroneously priced-out of the program.

We are grateful to Chairwoman Stabenow for including a legislative solution in her Farm Bill proposal, mirroring the Military Family Nutrition Act (H.R. 1763/S. 497), and we urge you to ensure that this policy change is included in any final Farm Bill agreement. To strengthen our national defense, ensure that the basic needs of our troops are being met, and provide for the American people, we hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Military Officers Association of America  
National Military Family Association

Alliance to End Hunger  
Blue Star Families  
Bread for the World  
Church World Service  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Cohen Veterans Network  
Combined Arms  
CommonDefense.us  
Congressional Hunger Center  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF)

---

<sup>2</sup> Barroso, Amanda. "The changing profile of the U.S. military: Smaller in size, more diverse, more women in leadership." Pew Research Center. 10 Sept. 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/10/the-changing-profile-of-the-u-s-military/>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. "2019 Demographics Profile of the Military Community." 2019. <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2019-demographics-report.pdf>

First Focus on Children  
Food Research & Action Center  
Franciscan Action Network  
Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America  
Jewish Federations of North America  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Women International  
Keshet  
Military Family Advisory Network  
Military Spouse Chamber of Commerce  
Modern Military Association of America  
MomsRising  
National Association of County Human Services Administrators  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National WIC Association  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
No One Left Behind  
Operation Homefront  
Psycharmor  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Share Our Strength  
Soldiers' Angels  
Student Veterans of America  
Tackle Hunger: Home of the Souper Bowl of Caring  
The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)  
The Episcopal Church  
The Root Cause Coalition  
The Workers Circle  
Tricare for Kids Coalition  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
United Church of Christ  
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)  
VoteVets