

May 25, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Biden and Speaker McCarthy,

On behalf of the 18 undersigned national Jewish organizations representing millions of members of Jewish communities around the country, we urge you to protect critical programs that support Americans facing hunger and poverty. It is imperative that you do not cut critical assistance to SNAP, WIC, and other vital anti-poverty programs.

No one should have to choose between putting food on the table or paying for medication or rent. Cutting funding for programs that assist low-income Americans will only increase hardship for the most vulnerable and add to long-term costs of preventable chronic problems.

Our sacred texts and traditions underscore the core Jewish values of the pursuit of justice and our collective responsibility to care for those struggling in our midst. In Psalm 82:3-4, we are instructed: “Defend the poor and the orphan; deal justly with the poor and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Many Jewish organizations and congregations partner with other faith communities and charitable groups to provide food, shelter, and basic services to those in need of emergency support. However, without strong and effective government programs, the charitable sector cannot meet the needs of those facing hunger and poverty. Even small cuts to federal safety net programs would overwhelm a charitable sector that is already stretched far beyond its capacity. Charity cannot replace robust economic systems and a steadfast commitment by the federal government to support those in need.

Misinformed rhetoric about so-called work requirements perpetuates harmful stereotypes of those who receive government assistance and threatens to exacerbate hardship and increase stigma. Creating more bureaucratic hurdles to federal programs only makes those programs harder to access and less effective. Time limits, work requirements, and more red tape do not result in long-term higher earnings or improved employment outcomes. They create more hunger, hardship, and hurdles to assistance for people who need help.

It is imperative that you — our government leaders — meet this moment with wisdom and compassion to find responsible fiscal solutions that protect vital assistance for all Americans.

Sincerely,

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Keshet

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.

Jewish Women International (JWI)

Joyous Justice

National Council of Jewish Women

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Rabbinical Assembly

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

The Shalom Center

Social Justice Commission of Conservative/Masorti Judaism

Tivnu: Building Justice

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Union for Reform Judaism

Uri L'Tzedek

The Workers Circle

cc: Majority Leader Charles Schumer, U.S. Senate

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate

Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, U.S. House of Representatives