

MAZON NEWS™

FALL 2018

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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that the days of awe are again upon us. So much has happened in a year, and yet so much still hangs in the balance for all Americans, and in particular those who struggle.

Fairness and collective responsibility have been the hallmarks of our nation for generations; yet we have seen these foundational tenets become loaded terms and partisan bargaining chips. As an organization founded on Jewish values and teachings, our firm belief in caring for the stranger guides our work and our approach to ending hunger.

In Jewish tradition—and across all faith traditions—we honor a fundamental value to take care of the most vulnerable among us. In Leviticus, we are commanded to leave the corners of our fields and the gleanings of our harvest and vineyards for the poor and the stranger. This directive is a clear expression of our collective responsibility for each other. Its wisdom respects the dignity of those who are poor and gives them a role in taking care of their needs by harvesting the corners of the fields themselves. It draws no distinction on the circumstance of poverty—the commandment is applied to all without judgment.

Yet we have seen so much judgment in this past year. We have seen the poor attacked simply for being poor. We have seen herculean efforts to dismantle the social safety net, ignoring that those who receive public benefits have fallen on hard times, and that these programs are the policy solution to preventing destitution.

Our nation's attention has been fixed on policymakers in Washington, D.C., and this period has been marked by great uncertainty about what is to come for America. We have seen harsh rhetoric, false narratives, and terms like 'welfare' used as weapons to demonize the poor and take empathy out of the equation. But it is our collective responsibility—as a nation, as compassionate people, and as the Jewish community—not to judge the poor or assume to know their circumstances, but to respond when and where help is needed.

Those of us who work to end hunger in America have worked diligently to keep the needs of hungry people in focus for our policymakers and our country. We know that the fate of millions of American families who struggle with hunger hangs in the balance as the 2018 Farm Bill is considered for reauthorization. We know that these are real people whose lives stand to be impacted by any cuts to public assistance programs. And we know that it is on their behalf, and on all of our behalf as compassionate individuals, that we remain focused on advocating for a fair Farm Bill and protecting policies that prevent widespread hunger.

We maintain this focus, and our mandate of ending hunger in the U.S. and Israel, with our dedicated community of partners and supporters by our side. This is what collective responsibility looks like. It is a community united under a belief that we must respect the dignity of the poor and all do our part to protect the most vulnerable among us.

And together, we *will* transform how it is, into **how it should be**.

L'shalom,

Liz Kanter Groskind

Liz Kanter Groskind
BOARD CHAIR



Abby J. Leibman

Abby J. Leibman
PRESIDENT & CEO



Emerging Advocacy Fund

INNOVATING TO FIGHT HUNGER

Since its founding in 1985, MAZON has been committed to addressing food insecurity in the United States through policy change. Among the strategies we use, we are particularly proud of the pioneering role we've played in helping to build a strong and resilient anti-hunger advocacy infrastructure in diverse regions across the United States.

We are also mindful that there is still work to be done—especially in those states where hunger is both prevalent and persistent. With our nation's nutrition safety net facing unprecedented threats, we must strengthen our resolve to empower state-based organizations to advocate on behalf of hungry people in their communities.

MAZON's **Emerging Advocacy Fund** was developed to offer partnership grants to organizations in some of the most food insecure states in the country, that are working on behalf of those in need.

This year's cohort of partners represents a mix of emerging and well-established nonprofit organizations engaging in local and statewide work to end hunger. These grants provide partners with



financial backing, for up to three consecutive years, to hire or retain staff who are dedicated to anti-hunger advocacy. In addition to providing financial support, MAZON also offers technical assistance to grantee partners and helps to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between them.

The largest impediment to advancing anti-hunger advocacy in these states is access to sustained resources and technical expertise to do dedicated anti-hunger work. MAZON is committed to providing just this kind of support, so these organizations can bring about real and necessary change that protects food insecure people in their state.

MAZON's 2018 Emerging Advocacy Fund Grantees

Alabama Food Bank Association *Huntsville, AL*

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance *Little Rock, AR*

Louisiana Budget Project *Baton Rouge, LA*

Good Shepherd Food Bank *Auburn, ME*

Preble Street *Portland, ME*

Missouri Budget Project *St. Louis, MO*

Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi *Flowood, MS*

Mississippi Center for Justice *Jackson, MS*

North Carolina Alliance for Health *Raleigh, NC*

North Carolina Justice Center *Raleigh, NC*

MomsRising *Raleigh, NC*

Tennessee Justice Center *Nashville, TN*

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands *Nashville, TN*

West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy *Charleston, WV*

West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition *Charleston, WV*

West Virginia University Food Justice Lab *Morgantown, WV*

#RabbisontheHill

MAZON'S Inaugural Rabbinic Justice Mission Brings Rabbis to the U.S. Capitol to Urge Lawmakers to Protect SNAP

On May 15 and 16, 2018, MAZON hosted 13 rabbis from across the country and representing multiple denominations for its inaugural Rabbinic Justice Mission, an event designed to engage passionate rabbinic leaders in vital anti-hunger advocacy.

The Mission was particularly timely, given the pending vote in the U.S. House of Representatives on the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), otherwise known as the Farm Bill, which provides funding and structure for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the cornerstone of the federal nutrition safety net.

Participating rabbis joined members of the MAZON Board of Directors for in-person meetings with 36 U.S. Senators and Members of Congress and staff, during which they hand-delivered a letter signed by almost 1000 U.S. Jewish clergy that urges Congress to protect SNAP in the Farm Bill and recognizes our collective responsibility for each other.



MAZON's inaugural Rabbinic Justice Mission participants, with MAZON Board of Directors and staff members.

Participants delivered a letter signed by almost 1000 U.S. Jewish clergy urging Congress to protect SNAP in the Farm Bill, recognizing our collective responsibility for each other.

"Jewish text and tradition compel us to honor the dignity of every person, especially those who are struggling to feed themselves and their families," said Rabbi Joel Pitkowsky, treasurer of the MAZON Board of Directors and rabbi at Congregation Beth Sholom in Teaneck, NJ. "The proposals put forth in this draft of the Farm Bill are at odds with the teachings of our faith. No matter a person's circumstance, no one deserves to be hungry."



Clockwise from top left: Samantha Koehler (Senator Bob Casey's staffer), Rabbi Michael Singer, Rabbi Cynthia Kravitz, Adam Tarr (Senator Casey's staffer), Daniel Rosove; top right: Steve Krikava, Rabbi Harold Kravitz, Senator Tina Smith; right middle: Rabbi Aaron Meyer, Liz Kanter Groskind, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts; bottom right: Rabbi Joel Pitkowsky, Steve Krikava, Dan Marrow (Representative Josh Gottheimer's staffer), Jonah Pitkowsky, Len David; bottom left: David Lash, Representative Jimmy Panetta; left middle: Liza Lieberman, Rick Loewenstein, Senator Gary Peters, Carolyn Schwarz Tisdale, Rabbi Jan Caryl Kaufman.



2018 Farm Bill Update



THE FIGHT TO PROTECT SNAP IN THE 2018 FARM BILL IS UNDERWAY, WITH THE NUTRITION SAFETY NET UNDER THREAT

While news coverage of the 2018 Farm Bill has heated up in the last two months—with pointed debates, passionate press statements, and dramatic roll call votes—the drafting and planning process has actually been going on for several years.

In anticipation of the current Farm Bill's expiration on September 30, 2018, the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have been laying the groundwork for a new Farm Bill. In the House, Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) held 23 hearings over the past two years on the issue; but when it came time to draft the bill, he ignored the valuable recommendations raised in those hearings that could further improve our nation's most effective nutrition assistance program, SNAP. Instead, the Chairman opted for partisanship and ideology by crafting a bill in secret that proposes restrictive and harsh eligibility and work requirements, a 'solution' which none of the experts Chairman Conaway had invited in the 23 hearings endorsed and which would cut an estimated 2 million Americans from the program. MAZON responded to the dangerous proposals in the House version of the Farm Bill with a series of statements and articles detailing the harmful impact the bill would have on older Americans, single mothers, Native and rural communities, and military families.¹ Unfortunately, the House bill passed by a razor-thin margin, with Democrats united in their opposition and a few Republicans voting against the bill.

¹Read more at mazon.org/farmbill.

Meanwhile on the other side of the U.S. Capitol, leaders of the Senate Agriculture Committee—Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)—took a completely different approach. They worked together to craft a bipartisan bill that focuses on SNAP program integrity while retaining structure and funding, and avoiding harmful provisions like those proposed in the House. The Senate bill passed easily and without any of the drama garnered by the House bill.

Now that both chambers have passed their versions of the bill, House and Senate leadership have assigned members to a "conference committee," whose charge is to negotiate the vast differences between the two proposals and come up with a unified bill that can be approved by both chambers. Once (if) that happens, the bill will be sent to the President's desk for his signature.

Through it all, MAZON and our partners have kept up our simple message to all Members of Congress, in both parties and both chambers: protect and strengthen SNAP on behalf of the millions of Americans struggling with food insecurity. We are proud of the role we have played in helping to ensure that the Farm Bill keeps food on the table for American families in need.

Grappling with Hunger on Campus

MAZON Has Played a Leading Role in Spotlighting the Growing Problem of College Hunger at the Federal and State Levels



College students have a lot of concerns: heavy course loads, juggling a school schedule with jobs and work study, high costs of tuition and student housing, and mounting student loan debt. But for too many students on college campuses around the country, there is an even greater threat to their well-being: hunger.

The number of food pantries springing up at university and college campuses has been on the rise for years, in response to a high prevalence of food insecurity and hunger among students.

A recent report from the University of California Regents shows that one in five UC students does not have access to adequate food or nutrition. Furthermore, nationwide studies show that half of all community college students are struggling with housing and/or food insecurity—many of whom struggle even while working and receiving financial aid.

While the response of higher education institutions often promotes charitable donations and creating food pantries, MAZON is focused on creating a robust systemic

policy response. We advocated for a Government Accountability Office study on the magnitude of food insecurity among students at U.S. colleges and universities, and organized and co-hosted the first Congressional Briefing on College Hunger in America on Capitol Hill in December 2017.

On the state level, MAZON and our partners have advanced first-of-their-kind policies that will help make food assistance more accessible to hungry students. In California, MAZON collaborated on and co-sponsored several pieces of successful legislation, including Assembly Bills 1747, 214, and 453. These laws provide the state of California with new tools to increase students' access to CalFresh (California's name for SNAP) and improve the coordination between anti-hunger efforts on college campuses and their surrounding communities.

Meet Two Organizations Working to Tackle College Hunger

Challah for Hunger: *building communities inspired and equipped to take action against hunger.*

Challah for Hunger (CfH) empowers college students to be leaders in the anti-hunger movement. Each week, thousands of student volunteers on 85 campuses gather to bake and sell challah, with proceeds supporting efforts to promote food security locally and nationally. While the dough rises, students discuss hunger issues and how to organize their peers to create change. A cohort of CfH student leaders are engaged in an educational campaign and national research project to work towards long-term solutions to end hunger on college campuses. MAZON is proud to have a representative from CfH serve on its Board.

Swipe Out Hunger: *working to end student hunger through common sense and innovative solutions.*

Swipe Out Hunger started as a grassroots movement at UCLA in 2010 and has since expanded nationwide. They developed "The Swipe Drive," which encourages students to donate extra dining hall swipes to classmates who face food insecurity. They've helped provide 1.5 million healthy dining hall meals across 23 states. They partnered with MAZON on Assembly Bill 453, which allotted \$7.5 million to California campuses to fight hunger. Following the passage of the legislation, eight California State University campuses launched meal share programs, with more in development within the CSU system and across the nation.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Meet Ruth and Dr. Peter Laibson, Whose Longtime Support of MAZON is Helping to Empower the Next Generation of Changemakers

Ruth and Dr. Peter Laibson found a great way to maximize their impact in supporting two organizations near and dear to their hearts.

Ruth is a long-time MAZON board member, a former Vice Chair, and currently serves as the Development Committee Chair. Peter is a world-renowned ophthalmologist, and is an alumnus of the University of Vermont (UVM) and serves on the Board of Advisors for its College of Arts and Sciences.

To help support both MAZON's advocacy work and UVM's ability to connect its students with outstanding internship opportunities—and to help build the capacity of future anti-hunger advocates—Ruth and Peter have generously committed to fund UVM students in summer internships at MAZON. In launching this specific summer internship opportunity, Peter and Ruth have joined together each of their interests in a project that serves the needs of both the university and MAZON. The recipient of this year's internship, Lauren Banister, is a UVM rising senior studying psychology and food systems. Lauren has volunteered with UVM's Challah for Hunger chapter and is passionate about food security. Her work with MAZON has shown her the power of advocacy and the importance of SNAP in preventing hunger. She recently joined the Laibsons on



Ruth and Dr. Peter Laibson, with MAZON intern and UVM student Lauren Banister, in front of the office of Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy.

Capitol Hill to thank Vermont's legislators for working for a Farm Bill that protects SNAP.

“ We know that summer internships are a critical stepping stone to future careers for many college students. We are thrilled that we can make this opportunity available for a UVM student, and, at the same time, offer a unique learning experience at MAZON. ”

- Ruth Laibson, MAZON Board Member

GIVE A GIFT TODAY

May the sounding of the shofar call you to act on behalf of all those who are hungry in our midst.

Give a gift today by using the attached envelope, visiting mazon.org, or by calling us at (800) 813-0557.

Thank you for your generous support!



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mazon.org

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR!

Help us fight on behalf of hungry families.
Please call us at (800) 813-0557
to join our monthly giving program today!

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Find out about life-income gifts, giving through your will, or other creative ways to support MAZON.
Please contact Amy Smith at asmith@mazon.org
or by phone at (424) 208-7226.

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WHO IS MAZON?

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

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