

# 2017 Federal Policy Agenda

## PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The federal nutrition safety net is the foundation of food assistance to low-income Americans to ensure that they can get the food they need when they fall on hard times. Congress must protect SNAP and other critical programs like TEFAP, and child nutrition programs to ensure they remain a resource for millions of Americans in need of food assistance.

### SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps) is the cornerstone of the nutrition safety net, providing immediate assistance to low-income Americans to ensure that they can get the nutrition they need when they fall on hard times. The countercyclical structure of SNAP allows it to respond efficiently and effectively to changes in the economy. For 2017, we urge Congress to **protect and strengthen SNAP**: SNAP is efficient and effective, reduces food insecurity and helps working families put healthy food on the table. Millions of unemployed Americans remain without a job, food assistance, or a job training program to enable economic recovery. We urge Congress to

- **Oppose efforts to block grant SNAP, cap or cut funding**, or otherwise restrict participation would result in millions more Americans losing food assistance. Under the current House proposal to block grant SNAP, New York would lose \$8 billion in federal funds between 2021-2026, and a loss of over 4.5 billion meals.
- **Strengthen SNAP benefits by calculating SNAP benefits based on the low-cost food plan.** Current SNAP benefits fall short of what households need to purchase an adequate diet for an entire month. Research has linked this gap to high-cost consequences including increased hospitalizations among adults with diabetes and learning disruptions for children.

### CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The federal child nutrition programs are an essential investment in the one in six children in America that face hunger. Ensuring all children have the nutritious food they need to learn, grow, and thrive is critical to our nation's future. In addition to protecting SNAP, the largest safety net for children, Congress should help maintain strong nutrition standards and efficient access to all child nutrition programs.

- While federal CNR legislation will not likely be pursued in 2017, **we urge Congress to protect the funding and structure of child nutrition programs in budget and spending legislation.**
- **We urge USDA to ensure that regulations on child nutrition programs protect access to these vital programs** for the millions of children that rely on them for nutritious food.



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## **THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP)**

As a member of Feeding America, our food bank receives food from a variety of sources, including retail store donations, manufacturing donations, produce, purchased food and TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program). Our food bank, along with others across the nation, is trying to meet increased need with constrained resources. Nutritious TEFAP commodities are critical to our food bank's ability to serve our community and make up over **15%** of the food that Food Bank of the Southern distributes. We urge Congress to

- **Oppose efforts to cut TEFAP through the federal budget process.**
- **Protect and strengthen The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP):** To enable resources needed by food banks, Congress should increase funding for TEFAP food purchases and protect TEFAP storage and distributions funds.
- **Appropriate full funding for TEFAP in the FY 2018 Budget,** including providing full funding for TEFAP food purchases at \$329 million a year, and \$100 million for TEFAP storage and distribution funds to support the infrastructure and distribution capacity necessary to meet need. At a time of elevated need, TEFAP commodity appropriations were below levels authorized in the Farm Bill.

## **PROTECT TAX INCENTIVES THAT STRENGTHEN FOOD BANKS AND WORKING FAMILIES**

Tax policy plays a key role in the fight against hunger and helps reduce food waste. Feeding America food banks rely on support from a variety of sources, including individual giving, government commodities, and donations from all segments of the food industry. We urge Congress to ensure charitable giving incentives that nonprofits rely on and tax credits for working families are protected in any tax reform language included in a budget resolution.

### **CHARITABLE TAX DEDUCTIONS**

- **Protect and strengthen the charitable tax deduction** to ensure the ability of our network to raise vitally needed funds and supplement vital federal programs.
- **Protect and strengthen food donation tax incentives,** which play a powerful role in connecting excess nutritious food with people in need. Without the tax incentives, it costs growers, retailers, and food companies more to donate food than it does to landfill it.

### **EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT AND CHILD TAX CREDIT**

- **Protect and expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC),** which lift millions of working families out of poverty and increase the stability they have found through the workforce.