

October 11, 2023

Chairman Debbie Stabenow  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition & Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member John Boozman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition & Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

As Christian organizations focused on alleviating poverty and promoting human dignity, we are motivated by our faith to respond to the growing hunger crisis. Conflict continues to both drive and result from hunger; worsening climate shocks threaten homes, crops, and livelihoods; and pandemic-era economic disruptions drive up the cost of nutritious food. Recently released figures from the 2023 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report note that up to 783 million people faced hunger in 2022. Nearly a third of the world – 2.4 billion people – experienced food insecurity last year, and over 3 billion people were unable to afford a healthy diet. 148 million children experienced stunted growth and development due to a chronic lack of essential nutrients, and 45 million children suffered from wasting, the most severe and life-threatening form of malnutrition.

Right now, far too many people are deprived of the agency and resources needed to feed themselves and their families and lead full, flourishing lives. Heeding the Biblical call to “uphold the cause of the oppressed and give food to the hungry” (Psalm 146:7), we are committed to changing the status quo. **By reauthorizing and strengthening U.S. international food assistance programs in Title III of the Farm Bill, we can save lives now while building the long-term resilience necessary to better insulate vulnerable communities and families from future shocks and stresses.**

As you know, Title III of the Farm Bill authorizes several important international food assistance programs, including Food for Peace Title II (P.L. 480), McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Food for Progress, and the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. As faith-based implementers and advocates, we support updates to these programs that build the resilience of local farmers and empower local communities to feed themselves. With your help, we can stem the tide of hunger and malnutrition and bring health and hope to more vulnerable children, families, and communities.

Our organizations have seen firsthand the transformational impact of resilience building programs. Food for Peace Title II non-emergency programs allow NGOs to introduce water, sanitation and hygiene practices, agriculture interventions like irrigation, and maternal and child health and nutrition initiatives. More than a hand-out, these interventions address the root causes of hunger. As a result, we request the commodity requirements be shifted to the emergency portion of Food for Peace and seek greater flexibility to use resilience interventions on the non-emergency side. We also oppose any efforts to decrease non-emergency program flexibility or funding, knowing such shortsighted approaches would prevent the critical work of

building self-sufficiency and risk exacerbating the current global hunger crisis while threatening U.S. foreign policy interests.

**For the McGovern-Dole program, we ask for changes that will enable the program to more fully support local farmers to be able to supply fresh food for school meals. We support increasing the percentage of spending allowed for local and regional procurement (LRP) from 10 percent to a range of 10 percent to 20 percent.** This change would promote a diverse, nutritious diet while simultaneously connecting farmers to the schools to ensure these schools can feed their own students.

Strong, flexible programs and robust funding for international food assistance programs ensures more vulnerable families are able to afford and access healthy and nutritious food, saving lives and creating a safer and more prosperous future for us all. It also serves as an important reflection of our nation's values and a reminder of American strength and generosity.

As organizations seeking to live out Christ's command "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8), we are grateful for the Committee's continued support and look forward to partnering with you to ensure communities challenged by hunger and poverty have the agency and resources necessary to reach their God-given potential.

Sincerely,



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Mark Viso, President & CEO, Food for the Hungry



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Myal Greene, President & CEO, World Relief



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Michael Kruger, President, Adventist Development & Relief Agency



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Doug Fountain, Executive Director, Christian Connections for International Health



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Edgar Sandoval Jr., President & CEO, World Vision



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Rev. Eugene Cho, President & CEO, Bread for the World