***Personalize this sample letter/email and make it your own!***

Don’t forget to delete all of the highlighted content and this section of instructions.

When your letter is complete, submit it at https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/farm-bill-input

<Date>

Re: Protect and strengthen SNAP and nutrition programs in the 2018 Farm Bill

Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and the Senate Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Committee regarding the 2018 Farm Bill reauthorization. The Farm Bill represents the primary federal investment in the country’s largest anti-hunger programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as CalFresh in California) and other core programs that provide vital nutrition for our nation’s children, working families, seniors and other vulnerable populations. [I/Your Organization] urge the Committee to use this opportunity to reaffirm our nation’s longstanding bipartisan commitment to addressing hunger by strengthening, not cutting our continued investment in SNAP and other vital anti-hunger programs.

As a [Parent, community organization, concerned citizen, etc.], the Farm Bill is important to me because… [Add why the Farm Bill, SNAP, and/or other nutrition programs are important to you or your organization].

[Feel free to use the sample introductory comments below, or include your own]

Over 20 percent of Californians live in poverty, including nearly one in four children. Low-income families in California face compounding obstacles to reaching economic stability and good health, including: high housing costs, inadequate wages, fewer job opportunities offering inconsistent work hours, unaffordable child care, lack of reliable transportation, and food insecurity. SNAP works to address these challenges as the first line of defense against hunger and as an effective anti-poverty program. In addition to providing vital nutrition assistance to over 4 million Californians, the program kept 806,000 people out of poverty each year from 2009-2012, including 417,000 children.

SNAP also plays an important role as an economic driver for retailers and agricultural producers. In 2016, SNAP generated $12.7 billion dollars in total economic activity statewide and supported more than 70,000 jobs all while feeding more than 4 million low-income Californians.

The overwhelming majority of SNAP participants are poor children, seniors, or people with disabilities. Nationwide, nearly 90% of participants are in households that contain a child under age 18, an elderly person 60 years or older, or a disabled individual. In California, 74% are in families with children and almost 50% are in working families.

In order to ensure SNAP continues working as intended to reduce hunger and poverty, [I/Your Organization] encourage the Committee to adopt the following recommendations as it considers the 2018 Farm Bill reauthorization.

[Below are CFPA’s specific Farm Bill recommendations for SNAP and other nutrition programs. Feel free to use these or include your own]

**Protect SNAP from funding cuts or structural changes**Block granting, or otherwise shifting program costs states, would end our country’s most effective response to hunger and put its participants at risk by:

* Eliminating SNAP’s ability to respond to increased need during an economic downturn or natural disasters;
* Allowing states to shift funds away from food assistance to other purposes when faced with large budget shortfalls; and
* Ending our nation’s longstanding bipartisan commitment to ensuring that poor families can obtain an adequate diet regardless of where they live.

**Improve benefit adequacy by updating the SNAP benefit formula**

Recent national surveys indicate broad, bipartisan support for increasing SNAP benefit amounts. The current SNAP benefit formula, based on the Thrifty Food Plan, does not reflect the true food purchasing abilities of low-income households, and should be changed to the more generous and realistic Low Cost Food Plan.

**Protect Broad-based Categorical Eligibility and the LIHEAP benefit**Restricting the use of these positive state options would increase administrative costs and make it harder for working families to qualify for help and accrue modest savings to lift them out of poverty and achieve long-term self sufficiency.

**Repeal the three-month time limit on SNAP benefits within a three-year period for childless adults known as “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents”**The SNAP time limit for unemployed, childless adults living in extreme poverty does nothing to improve skills and employability of those affected; it only cuts off food assistance for people struggling to find work. Any serious proposal to increase work among SNAP recipients must be paired with significant investments in education, training, and skill development.

**Expand support for emergency food programs**Increase funding for commodity food programs providing nutrition assistance when SNAP cannot through food banks, faith-based organizations, Tribal Organizations, and other community organizations, including: the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

**Strengthen complementary programs that help improve benefit adequacy and promote healthy eating**Increase funding and support for proven programs that promote healthier food purchases and consumption, such as: the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI), the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

**Support nutrition education for SNAP-eligible Californians**SNAP-Ed is an integral and important part of the program’s mission to expand access to healthy food and improve the health of participants. Funding for SNAP-Ed should be maintained at current levels, though not at the expense of funding for the core program.

As you deliberate the 2018 Farm Bill, we urge the committee to work together to craft a unified Farm Bill that strengthens and protects federal nutrition programs and ensures a healthy, hunger-free California.

[Make a closing statement such as]:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the next Farm Bill.

Respectfully,

[Make sure to include your name, organization (if applicable), city, and state.]