



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

March 24, 2020

In the name of God, we ask the U.S. Senate to include an increase in SNAP food assistance in the recovery program.

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Leaders from a wide array of leaders from major church bodies and Christian organizations came together on a Circle of Protection conference call yesterday. We are Catholics, Historic Protestants and Evangelicals, conservative and liberal. Yesterday's call revealed strong consensus among us – grounded in the Christian gospel of God's love for all people – on the importance of expanding SNAP food assistance now.

An expansion of SNAP would help the millions of households who are vulnerable to destitution and severe, prolonged hunger in this crisis. The great majority of these people are children, seniors, or disabled people. Many of these families include someone who is now earning some money, but the part-time and informal jobs they rely on are especially likely to disappear.

We are particularly concerned for those who are going to be most impacted by the economic fallout from the spread of COVID-19—low income workers and families at economic risk. Millions will likely lose their jobs, be furloughed, or have massive cuts in their working hours which will impact their ability to meet basic needs for their families.

SNAP is one of the most rapid and effective forms of stimulus because SNAP households tend to spend additional income and resources—in this case within their local economy. 2008 taught us that increasing SNAP benefits is on the best means of shoring up the economy on a short-term basis. Increasing SNAP benefits will help ensure that families are able to feed their families even despite a sudden drop in income—something that millions are likely to face in the coming weeks and months.

Jesus said, For I was hungry, and you gave me food. In this pandemic crisis, we will obey that. We ask you to also observe the moral command that comes from our faith.

Please do everything you can to ensure we get this crucial provision in the final deal. Nothing will do more for Americans and the American economy in this moment than an increase in SNAP benefits. We will be watching this closely.

From the Circle of Protection co-chairs

Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World

Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners

Rev. Carlos Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together U.S.A.

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network and President, Skinner Leadership Institute