



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

April 2, 2026

Dear Senator/Representative:

As you set national policies and priorities for addressing the needs of hungry children and families who can't afford the food they need, please make necessary adjustments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to enable states to administer effective and efficient food assistance.

We write to you as the Circle of Protection, a coalition of national denominations and ministries representing a diverse spectrum of Christianity across this country. The organizations in the Circle collectively represent over 100 million members. Most of our churches help people in need, and we work together to protect and strengthen programs and policies that help those in our communities and congregations who are struggling to put food on the table and provide for their families. Across all our traditions, we follow the teachings of Jesus, who urged his followers again and again to help those who are hungry or sick or in need in other ways (Matthew 25).

Many of our churches run food pantries and soup kitchens that serve hundreds in their communities. These ministries will always step in to serve and meet community needs. We know that ending hunger is key to helping children learn in school and become healthy and productive adults. However, to effectively address hunger on the scale needed, private charity must be paired with effective public programs, like SNAP, a temporary lifeline for more than 40 million people in this country.

For decades, SNAP has been funded through federal appropriations and administered by the states. Last year, Congress made changes to SNAP that will have significant consequences for states, and in turn, our congregants and church ministries. In particular, states are now on the hook for paying a portion of SNAP benefits, based on the state's administrative error rate. We support efforts to increase efficiency and reduce administrative errors, and we want states to do so responsibly. Most states only have until the end of September, and this short turnaround time—exacerbated by the government shutdown last year and delayed guidance from the Department of Agriculture—has left states scrambling to update their administrative systems in a matter of mere months. Without adequate time to safely and efficiently address this challenge, many states are reflexively imposing new barriers to SNAP participation. It is possible that some states may opt out of SNAP entirely, leading to a spike in preventable hunger and malnutrition.

Recent data released by USDA already show concerning drops in SNAP participation. Arizona has seen more than a 40 percent drop. We are seeing the increased need show up in our congregations and communities, in our church food pantries and soup kitchens. We want fewer

people to need SNAP, but we do not want people facing hunger and hardship cut from the program.

A few states have been given two years to bring their systems into compliance. In light of the unique challenges presented by the disruptive government shutdown, **we urge you to give all states the same grace period to comply with the new requirements and develop plans to cover any additional SNAP benefit costs.**

God has blessed us with fertile land and hardworking farmers who produce more than enough food for all our people. While there is still much room for improvement, we are grateful to live in a country that promotes both private charity and a reliable public safety net for those in need. We assure you of our prayers as you lead our nation toward a more perfect union.

Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann, Dean's Advisor, Virginia Theological Seminary; Coordinator, Circle of Protection

John Carr, Founder, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

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

Rev. Chris Kellerman, S.J., Secretary of Justice and Ecology, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

Rev. Dr. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Rev. Carlos Malavé, President, Latino Christian National Network

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President, National Council of Churches

Rev. Amy Reumann, Senior Director for Witness in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Kerry Alys Robinson, President and CEO, Catholic Charities USA

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President and Founder, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Rev. Lori Tapia, National Hispanic Pastor, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, General Minister and President/Chief Executive Officer, United Church of Christ

Bishop Julius C. Trimble, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church

Rev. Jim Wallis, Inaugural Chair and Founding Director, Center on Faith and Justice, Georgetown University

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