CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

November 19, 2026

Dear Senator/Representative:

We write to you as members of the Circle of Protection, a coalition of national church bodies and related ministries representing the diversity of Christianity in this country. Together, the church bodies in the Circle of Protection have close to 100 million members. As Christians, we believe that God is especially concerned with the plight of people in poverty – and that a key moral measure of government policies is how they treat those Jesus called “the least of these” (Matthew 25:45).

Nearly all our churches help people in need, and we have grave concerns about the growing level of food insecurity, exacerbated by recent changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that will shift more program costs to the states next year and penalize states based on their administrative error rates. Since July of 2025, 5.5 million people, including two million children, have lost access to their SNAP benefits. Some of these are eligible people and children who have lost benefits due to intensive efforts states are taking to reduce error rates that are creating barriers and impediments for families to remain on SNAP. **We urgently call on Congress to delay the forthcoming shift in SNAP benefit costs to states, to give them time to reduce errors and thus the required state payments to the federal government without cutting food to hungry families. The delay should be approved without any additional cuts to SNAP to offset the cost.**

Churches and private charities are doing all they can to fill the gap, but demand for food aid has risen in nearly every state as people struggle with food prices and the millions who have lost their SNAP benefits turn to charity to help feed their families. Without immediate congressional action, this need will continue to grow at a time when food banks, food pantries, and other food ministries are already stretched thin.

The timing is urgent. While the benefit cost shift does not go into effect until October of 2027, states have been working for months to reduce errors. Most state legislative sessions begin in January and must adopt their next fiscal year budgets. However, FY '26 error rates which help determine state matching payments will not come out until June, after some states have adopted their budgets. States must plan for the additional cost now without knowing how much they owe. With an estimated collective bill in the billions of dollars, states will have to cut other programs, downsize SNAP, or potentially even drop out altogether. Further, the Department of Agriculture still hasn't issued guidance for implementing this new SNAP benefit cost shift.

A handful of states with the highest payment error rates get an additional two years before the benefit cost shift goes into effect. Congress should put all states on equal footing, giving state governments more time to responsibly lower their error rates.

The consequences of inaction are dire for families who are already struggling to make ends meet and who face the loss of food assistance. The Bible consistently speaks to God's love for all people, calling us to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable among us. **We urge you to act before the end of the year to delay the shift in SNAP benefit costs for all states.**

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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

Tom De Vries, President/CEO, Citygate Network

Fr. Chris Kellerman, SJ, Secretary of Justice & Ecology, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

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

Rev. Carlos L. Malave, President, Latino Christian National Network

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President, National Council of Churches

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, FCNL

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

Kerry Robinson, President & CEO, Catholic Charities USA

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

Dr. Monica Schaap Pierce, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together

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

Rev. Adam Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Heather Taylor, Interim President and CEO, Bread for the World

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

Alan Yarborough, Director of Government Relations, The Episcopal Church