



[DATE]

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
[INSERT ADDRESS]

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
[INSERT ADDRESS]

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
[INSERT ADDRESS]

The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear Chair Cole, Chair Harris, Ranking Member DeLauro and Ranking Member Bishop,

Thank you for working with the Feeding America food bank network on our fiscal year 2025 (FY25) agriculture appropriations priorities. On behalf of the 44 million individuals experiencing food insecurity in the United States, the Feeding America national organization and the undersigned food banks and statewide food bank associations urge Congress to pass an FY25 agriculture appropriations bill that fully funds and protects the underlying structure of critical nutrition assistance programs. **Specifically, we ask Congress to provide full funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) storage and distribution at the authorized level of \$100 million.** This critical funding will help food banks offset the rising costs of storing, transporting and distributing foods from the USDA and support the U.S. agricultural economy. We also ask Congress to preserve dignity and choice for people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by allowing them to purchase the foods that best meet their needs. TEFAP and SNAP will help meet the persistent, increased need for food assistance that food banks are seeing across the country.

In addition, we urge Congress to maintain the USDA's authority to provide domestic commodity support through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and Section 32. These USDA food purchases support domestic producers and are critical relief valves that help mitigate market disruptions by connecting people facing hunger with surplus farm production. Over the past several years, USDA purchases through CCC and Section 32 have provided a significant amount of food distributed through TEFAP to help meet the rising need. This support also provides a wide variety of fresh and nutritious foods such as produce, dairy and seafood, which may not be typically available to food banks.

The Feeding America network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations and over 60,000 faith-based and charitable agency partners, including food pantries and meal programs, helped provide 5.2 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year. Today, many food banks are doing all they can to meet unprecedented levels of demand, but they are under immense strain, due to increased costs for

purchasing and transporting food. In a recent Feeding America survey, around 90% of responding food banks reported seeing demand for food assistance increase or stay the same in April 2024 compared to April 2023. Alongside increased demand, food prices remain high—an additional challenge for food banks and other emergency food providers who are doing their level best to meet the need in their communities. Food prices increased 5.8% in 2023 on top of a 9.9% increase in 2022, according to the USDA Economic Research Service’s 2024 Food Price Outlook.

TEFAP is a cornerstone of the charitable sector’s food supply, providing on average around 25% of the food distributed through Feeding America food banks and local hunger-relief programs. TEFAP is a win-win-win for our nation’s farmers, food banks and people facing hunger—connecting surplus domestic commodities to food banks to help individuals and families put food on the table.

TEFAP storage and distribution funds are a critical resource for food banks to offset the costs of storage, transportation and administration of USDA foods. Food banks and other emergency food providers already routinely bridge the gap in funding for TEFAP storage and distribution. Failure to fully fund TEFAP administrative costs will further strain the ability of Feeding America food banks to serve the needs of their communities—meaning less food for seniors, families, children, active military members and other individuals facing hunger.

In FY24, the agriculture appropriations bill provided \$80 million for storage and distribution—a 13% cut from FY23 and the steepest cut in the program’s history. Continued underfunding of TEFAP storage and distribution will harm food banks across the country, particularly under-resourced food banks and those serving rural areas. TEFAP is a rural hunger lifeline, serving 96% of rural counties in 2020.

The \$80 million Congress provided in FY24 for TEFAP storage and distribution is insufficient to meet the needs of the charitable food system and the individuals we serve. When Congress provided \$81 million in FY22 for TEFAP storage and distribution, that amount covered, on average, only 34% of the total projected cost for Feeding America food banks to store and distribute TEFAP commodities. Food banks routinely transfer up to 20% of funding for food purchases to make up for the shortfall in TEFAP storage and distribution funds. In FY22, food banks spent \$534 million distributing TEFAP foods, and only received \$174 million in TEFAP storage and distribution reimbursement through Congress and this transfer authority. We urge Congress and the Appropriations Committees to increase TEFAP storage and distribution funding for FY25.

Since the 1930s, Congress and the USDA have used funding flexibility provided through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and Section 32 authority to support U.S.-grown agriculture products. Food banks and other emergency food providers rely on timely CCC and Section 32 purchases throughout the year to supplement TEFAP food and donations. Maintaining funding for these programs and USDA’s authority and flexibility to carry out these purchases will help prevent shortages of food at food banks across the country. Simply put, we urge Congress to maintain the funding flexibility CCC and Section 32 authority provide to help connect our neighbors facing hunger to nutritious, U.S.-grown food.

Federal commodity assistance programs like TEFAP, CCC and Section 32 have helped millions of families keep food on the table during tough economic times. We are committed to ensuring these vital programs serve individuals and families in every community as well as American growers and producers who have excess food. We must fully fund and strengthen TEFAP storage and distribution, CCC and Section 32 authority to maintain the vital support that these programs provide to families facing hunger and our nation’s farmers.

[Insert list of food banks and Partner State Associations, sorted by state]