

September , 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairwoman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Carter  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Cochran, Rogers, Hoeven and Carter, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, and Ranking Members Lowey, Shaheen and Roybal-Allard:

As you work towards finalizing the Fiscal Year 2017 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we respectfully urge you to fund the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) at no less than the current level of \$120 million.

Since 1983, EFSP has proved itself to be an essential public-private partnership, supplementing critical public and nonprofit services to meet the immediate and short-term needs of individuals and families facing economic crisis. Following the severe economic impact of the 1982 Recession, Congress established the EFSP program as the first national program to respond to homelessness in America.

The program primarily serves to supplement and expand the efforts of existing local governments and nonprofit organizations that provide temporary and preventative shelter, food, and rental and utility assistance services to families and individuals who are at risk of homelessness and food insecurity.

With low administrative costs, high administrative oversight, and a national and local board structure composed of dedicated charitable organizations, EFSP is a unique program that provides quick redress to the neediest areas, large and small. During its 33-year history, the EFSP program has supported the work of over 14,000 human service agencies in more than 2,500 counties and cities across the country.

Typically, Congress has increased the EFSP appropriation during times of economic downturn and high unemployment. For example, Congress increased the EFSP program from \$153 million in FY 2008 to \$200 million in FY 2009 and FY2010, in order to bolster the program during the Great Recession. However, since FY 2011, Congress has reduced the program's appropriation to \$120 million annually, which is significantly lower than the pre-recession funding level. The retraction in funding has restricted the reach of the program even as tens of millions of families and individuals remain economically vulnerable. With respect to FY 2017, we strongly oppose any further funding cuts to the program for good reason.

Food insecurity exists in every county in America. There remain a record number of families that are living just one unforeseen event away from financial crisis. Millions of Americans continue to be at risk of falling into homelessness even as the economy slowly rebounds. In this post-recession period, the working poor are facing greater challenges to finding affordable housing, as rents for market-rate housing have escalated. The current unemployment rate belies the tens of millions of workers who were forced to take low-wage, part-time jobs or are no longer participating in the workforce. Several cities have declared states of emergency to galvanize attention to get the resources they need to tackle a worsening homeless crisis. We are among the thousands of public and nonprofit agencies working to meet these economic challenges with the critical support of the EFSP program.

The EFSP program provides a backstop for economically vulnerable populations, in particular the elderly, families with children, Native Americans, veterans, and individuals with mental and physical disabilities and illness. We know firsthand that the program is a valuable and unique federal safety-net for millions of families and individuals who are economically at-risk. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to fund the EFSP program in FY 2017 at no less than the current level of \$120 million, and to consider returning the program funding to its pre-recession level beginning in FY 2018.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,