

## **SAMPLE SIGN-ON LETTER FOR STATE ANTI-HUNGER GROUPS**

January \_\_, 2005

Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

As organizations dedicated to combating hunger in communities across the state of [INSERT STATE NAME], we express our grave concerns about possible budget proposals in Washington that could have a profound negative impact on our anti-hunger efforts. We understand that Congress may consider legislation that would require cuts in entitlement programs through the fast-track “reconciliation” process or impose some form of spending cap on entitlement programs, include the nutrition programs. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to oppose these proposals, which we believe would have a devastating impact on anti-hunger efforts in our state.

According to official annual U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates, there are [INSERT # FROM COLUMN 2] families in [INSERT STATE NAME] who are hungry or threatened by hunger. This represents [INSERT % FROM COLUMN 3] of all families in our state, and includes families with children, senior citizens, and people working at low-wage jobs who have difficulty making ends meet. While the services of local emergency feeding agencies help many in crisis, the fastest, most reliable way to reduce hunger is through the national nutrition programs. The largest nutrition program which combats hunger is the Food Stamp Program, which in FY2004 brought \$ [INSERT #FROM COLUMN 4] in federal funds into our state for low-income people to spend in local supermarkets and grocery stores. Similarly, the Child Nutrition Programs (like school lunch and breakfast, summer food and after school meals) brought \$ [INSERT # FROM COLUMN 5] into our state in FY2004.

In keeping with our work to alleviate hunger, many of our organizations work to expand enrollment in the Food Stamp and Child Nutrition programs to ensure they reach more eligible families, including low-wage working families. Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and the Earned Income Tax Credit are also particularly important resources for the families that we serve and should also not be cut or weakened.

We are deeply concerned by proposals that might weaken the structure and/or funding for these programs during consideration of the FY2006 budget. Imposing a cap on federal funding for programs like Food Stamps and Child Nutrition would inevitably undermine our efforts to reach more of the eligible needy households and children. It would also undercut these programs’ ability to respond to increased need when national or local economic conditions deteriorate or disasters occur.

Cuts in these entitlement programs would shift the costs to states, localities, charities and poor families, with the outcome worse for all. Hunger is a national problem that deserves a national solution. States and local government budgets, already stretched too thin, cannot make-up a reduction in the level of federal funding that supports these programs. Local organizations that provide food assistance already struggle to serve the [INSERT # COLUMN 2] families facing hunger in [INSERT STATE NAME] today. And, food insecure families who too often now face tough choices — between food and medicine, food and shelter, and food and transportation —are ill equipped to absorb federal cuts to their nutrition benefits.

Programs which serve low-income families are not the cause of the deficit. They should not have to suffer to provide the solution.

We therefore urge you to oppose spending caps that would cover entitlement programs, cuts in entitlement programs for people in need, or any other changes to the structure of the nutrition programs, such as a block grant, which would undermine their ability to respond to increased hunger. The families of **[INSERT STATE NAME]** need your help to reduce hunger and to oppose policies that would drain badly-needed resources from our communities.

Sincerely,

## Inserts for State Sign-on Letter

	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>	<b>Column 4</b>	<b>Column 5</b>
State	Number of Food Insecure Households, 2001-03 average (thousands)	Share of Households That are Food Insecure, 2001-03 average	Food Stamp Program Benefits in FY 2004 (\$millions)	Child Nutrition Payments in FY 2004 (\$millions)
Alabama	226	13%	\$513	\$212
Alaska	27	12%	\$64	\$30
Arizona	241	12%	\$578	\$236
Arkansas	165	16%	\$347	\$134
California	1,539	12%	\$1,990	\$1,453
Colorado	167	10%	\$251	\$105
Connecticut	103	8%	\$198	\$88
Delaware	21	7%	\$57	\$30
District of Columbia	24	9%	\$98	\$25
Florida	764	12%	\$1,269	\$638
Georgia	417	13%	\$924	\$471
Hawaii	41	10%	\$152	\$43
Idaho	69	14%	\$91	\$47
Illinois	378	8%	\$1,211	\$430
Indiana	239	10%	\$550	\$202
Iowa	111	10%	\$176	\$96
Kansas	124	12%	\$158	\$104
Kentucky	183	11%	\$543	\$195
Louisiana	208	12%	\$754	\$282
Maine	49	9%	\$140	\$37
Maryland	161	8%	\$287	\$150
Massachusetts	157	6%	\$304	\$173
Michigan	400	10%	\$896	\$285
Minnesota	136	7%	\$248	\$173
Mississippi	160	15%	\$361	\$193
Missouri	233	10%	\$663	\$217
Montana	47	13%	\$79	\$30
Nebraska	69	10%	\$109	\$73
Nevada	71	9%	\$120	\$57
New Hampshire	32	6%	\$44	\$24
New Jersey	272	9%	\$378	\$222
New Mexico	104	15%	\$217	\$121
New York	719	10%	\$1,876	\$752
North Carolina	436	14%	\$753	\$375
North Dakota	18	7%	\$40	\$24
Ohio	488	11%	\$1,008	\$336
Oklahoma	195	14%	\$398	\$185
Oregon	179	13%	\$415	\$116
Pennsylvania	452	10%	\$933	\$338
Rhode Island	45	11%	\$74	\$34
South Carolina	214	14%	\$501	\$202
South Dakota	26	9%	\$54	\$32
Tennessee	250	11%	\$812	\$244
Texas	1,163	15%	\$2,307	\$1,244
Utah	108	15%	\$123	\$92
Vermont	23	9%	\$40	\$17
Virginia	238	8%	\$476	\$206
Washington	276	12%	\$455	\$187
West Virginia	67	9%	\$232	\$78
Wisconsin	193	9%	\$269	\$153
Wyoming	21	10%	\$25	\$17
U.S.	12,050	11%	\$24,559	\$11,207

Sources of data

Food Insecurity:	<i>Household Food Security in the United States, 2003</i> , Economic Research Service
FSP Benefits:	Food and Nutrition Service Program Data
Benefit, Typical Household:	Food and Nutrition Service Program Data, CBPP tabulations of FY02 FSP Quality Control Data
Participation:	Food and Nutrition Service Program Data
State Participation Rates:	<i>Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2001</i> , Food and Nutrition Service
CN Payments:	Food and Nutrition Service Program Data