Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2015

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

As the subcommittee begins to develop its upcoming Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations legislation, we respectfully request your consideration of the needs of our nation's network of food banks and other emergency food providers. Many of these providers are struggling to meet sustained high levels of demand while facing increased costs for purchasing and transporting food.

Specifically, we ask you to include full funding of $320 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) commodity purchases, as mandated by the 2014 Farm Bill. In addition, we ask you provide the full authorized level of $100 million for TEFAP Storage and Distribution funding to help food banks and emergency feeding agencies with the rising costs of storing, transporting, and distributing foods to the needy. We also urge the committee to work with the Secretary of Agriculture to identify opportunities for increasing the supply of TEFAP commodities in the coming fiscal year through bonus and specialty crop purchases. This is particularly important given the significant declines in TEFAP bonus purchases.

The following factors have been placing strong pressures on the nation's emergency food assistance system:

- Demand for emergency food remains high in communities all across America. According to Feeding America's study "Hunger in America 2014," more than 46.5 million people – one in seven Americans – receive emergency food each year through the nation's network of food banks and the agencies they serve.
- With millions of Americans finding reemployment at reduced hours or wages, the need for food assistance remains high and food banks are hard pressed to meet needs in their communities.
- TEFAP Storage and Distribution's current funding level of $49 million only covers 21.9% of the cost of distributing TEFAP commodities – leaving food banks to bridge the gap and taking money away from vital programs to do so. Food banks often must use donated funds to help, meaning less services for clients in need, when TEFAP Storage

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and Distribution funds fall short of what is needed to distribute TEFAP foods to clients. Chronic underfunding of TEFAP Storage and Distribution has resulted in millions of potential meals not being delivered to clients in need.

- The combination of higher commodity prices and reduced availability of bonus commodities will continue to significantly impact the ability of food banks to meet demand at a time when the need for emergency food assistance remains at record levels. In FY2014, TEFAP foods represented 20% of the 3.6 billion pounds of food distributed by Feeding America food banks. These figures include commodity purchases mandated by the 2014 Farm Bill as well as bonus commodity purchases made by USDA when necessitated by market conditions. Unfortunately for food banks, as a result of strong agriculture markets, USDA bonus commodity purchases have declined in the last two years, from a high of $302 million in FY2012. Purchases declined 23% in FY2013 and 16% in FY2014. With little surplus agriculture food projected in 2015, we are concerned this decline in bonus commodities will continue.

Providing the mandated funding level for TEFAP commodities in addition to fully funding the authorized amount of $100 million for TEFAP Storage and Distribution is critical if our emergency feeding agencies are to serve the growing numbers of people coming to them for help. We want to specifically highlight sustained high demand coupled with declining state and local resources are making it increasingly difficult to cover these costs. Food banks are having to make the difficult choices to take funds designated for food purchases and spend then on TEFAP food distribution.

We appreciate your consideration of our request for full funding for TEFAP Commodities and for TEFAP Storage and Distribution funds. We look forward to working with you on these and other pressing issues before the Committee. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

DON YOUNG
Member of Congress

ROBERT A. BRADY
Member of Congress

RODNEY DAVIS
Member of Congress

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Lynn Jenkins
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