



March 27, 2007

Chairman John Spratt  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1401 Longworth Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt

The House Budget Committee's FY 2008 budget resolution provides an opportunity to make modest but important progress in the fight against hunger. It rejects cuts to the nutrition safety net proposed by the President's budget and instead allows for potential new investments vitally needed to improve the adequacy and reach of food stamp benefits. We will support its passage even as we continue to seek broader relief for our nation's hungry people.

We believe that the testimony that Boston pediatrician Deborah Frank and South Carolina food banker Denise Holland presented to your committee on February 15 made clear the urgency of the problem of hunger in America, especially for our nation's children. According to U.S. Census Bureau/USDA data, more than 35 million people in the U.S. – 12.4 million of them children – live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger. Food stamp benefits provide a first defense against hunger but are too meager to solve the problem. Food stamp benefits average just \$1 per person per meal. The minimum monthly benefit is stuck at the decades-old level of \$10. The program is missing four in ten eligible people. Moreover, many vulnerable populations are excluded from eligibility, including many lawfully present immigrants and low-income jobless adults willing to work.

The 2007 reauthorization of the Farm Bill can and must correct for gaps in the food stamp program. Our top priority for the Farm Bill remains new investments to strengthen the Food Stamp Program.

The House Budget Committee's five-year \$20 billion reserve fund for Farm Bill reauthorization provides a framework for making a downpayment on food stamp improvements. It is preferable to the Senate's Farm Bill reserve level of \$15 billion. While we are disappointed that neither the House nor Senate Farm Bill reserve fund is actually financed nor as large as the financed amount set aside for the 2002 Farm Bill, we believe the House Budget Resolution Farm Bill reserve fund does provide a framework for securing new investments in the Food Stamp Program.

We appreciate that the House Budget Resolution rejects cuts to the nutrition safety net proposed by the President's budget. It rejects the change in food stamp "categorical eligibility" that would drop 329,000 people in low-income working families with children from the food stamp rolls. It rejects the elimination of the commodity supplemental food program. And it rejects cuts to WIC administrative funding that would lead to fewer clinics and services for pregnant women, infants and young children.

We also applaud the Budget Committee for its Sense of the House provision, which stated “that the Department of Agriculture programs that help fight hunger should be maintained and that the House should seize opportunities to enhance those programs to reach people in need and to fight hunger.”

In sum, we will support passage of the House Budget Committee's FY 2008 budget resolution even as we seek even greater investments in the nutrition safety net.

We look forward to our continued work together in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Weill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James D. Weill  
President