

January 22, 2009

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) strongly supports the House American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan to get our nation's economy moving forward and to support families hard hit by the current economic downturn. FRAC is committed to ending hunger and dramatically reducing poverty in this country. At this time of rising poverty, hunger and other deprivation, we especially appreciate and support the bill's provisions to strengthen the national nutrition safety net and target nutrition and tax assistance to families and communities struggling to make ends meet.

We believe these investments make economic sense at the same time that they are essential to meet growing need. The \$20 billion for temporary SNAP/Food Stamp improvements will provide effective economic stimulus as well as help families put food on the table. Indeed, economists across the political spectrum cite a SNAP/Food Stamp boost as the investment that gives the economy the biggest stimulative bang for the buck! Similarly, other provisions of the package that target relief to lower-income consumers will put funds into the hands of those people most likely to get them into the stream of commerce.

The temporary 13.6 percent increase in the SNAP/Food Stamp maximum allotment will be implemented quickly and efficiently via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology and help SNAP participants obtain a more nutritionally adequate diet. The suspension of time limits on SNAP/Food Stamp benefits applied to unemployed adults without children will ensure nutrition assistance for those job seekers now facing longer bouts of unemployment. The additional \$300 million for state SNAP/Food Stamp administrative costs will give states vital resources to meet growing caseload demands, maintain the SNAP/Food Stamp program's excellent record of integrity, and facilitate the timely delivery of benefits to needy households.

The \$726 million to boost afterschool snack reimbursement and to expand the current eight-state afterschool supper program nationwide in low-income areas also will target program and nutritional support to vulnerable children and working families struggling to keep or find jobs or extra hours of work. Many of these children live in families where parents, faced with reduced wages or hours, need to juggle multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. These jobs often require parents to work hours that force them to obtain extended child care and programming beyond traditional work hours. The nutritious snacks and suppers served in these

afterschool programs also go a long way to support local public and private agencies – Boys and Girls Clubs, Ys and other youth service groups, religious congregations, schools, Parks and Recreation Department programs and others – in low-income areas grappling with the need to provide expanded quality programs and services in the midst of dwindling resources.

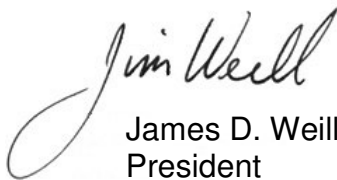
The \$150 million allocated by the House Appropriations Committee for TEFAP will help food banks and emergency feeding organizations continue to respond to record demands for emergency food. A reliable supply of nutritious, high quality TEFAP commodities provides an important backbone to the food bank network.

In addition to the nutrition provisions, FRAC strongly supports the recovery package's other targeted assistance to low-income individuals and families, such as: the expansion of the refundable provision of the Child Tax Credit, which allows more low-income working families to start getting a phased-in credit with the first dollar of earnings and let's moderate income working families benefit from all or most of the credit as more affluent families do; Earned Income Tax Credit expansion; assistance to states for Medicaid costs; a boost in SSI payments; major unemployment insurance improvements; and added funds for senior nutrition, emergency food and shelter, TANF, child care and Head Start, WIC management information systems, LIHEAP, child support enforcement, the Community Services Block Grant, and other programs important to low-income people.

FRAC will redouble our efforts to secure favorable action on these provisions in the House and the strongest possible recovery package, both in the House and in the Senate.

We look forward to our continued work together to address the needs of those people and communities who are struggling the most in the current economic crisis.

Sincerely,



James D. Weill
President
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)