



FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER

Comments

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Comments by Kimberley Chin, Director of FRAC's Maryland Hunger Solutions, May 14, 2008

Thank you, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. My name is Kimberley Chin, and I am with Maryland Hunger Solutions, an arm of the Food Research and Action Center. The Food Research and Action Center is an advocacy group that aims to end hunger and improve nutrition of low-income Americans. And, Maryland Hunger Solutions leads that work in Maryland.

I'd like to thank Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Chairman Rangel for their leadership on the Nutrition Title. And, I'd like to thank the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus for their important and effective work on the nutrition issues in the bill.

This is a critical time for the Farm Bill and the improvements it contains. The more than \$10 billion of new funding invested in the Farm Bill's Nutrition Title will go a long way to helping hungry Americans. According to the latest USDA data, in 2006, 35 million Americans faced a constant struggle against hunger. In my state of Maryland, more than half a million people face this same struggle.

These numbers almost certainly have gotten worse as low-income people in this country cope with skyrocketing prices for food, energy, and housing, and a slowing economy. Hunger is on the rise, and low-income families are stretched to the limit.

That's why it is so important that Congress pass the Farm Bill. Nationally, more than 28 million people participate in the Food Stamp Program. In Maryland, more than 300,000 people participate in the program each month, and nearly 70 percent are members of minority groups.

The Nutrition Title boosts emergency food assistance program funding for food banks, and makes essential and long-overdue improvements to the Food Stamp Program that will benefit current recipients. First, it restores the indexing of the standard deduction so benefits are not eroded by inflation. It also increases the minimum benefit – which has not been raised in 30 years – and ties it to inflation. And then, it improves access to the program by indexing asset limits and no longer counting retirement and education accounts against a person's eligibility for the program.

Across that nation and in Maryland – in cities, suburbs, and rural areas – struggling families will benefit from the improvements made by the Farm Bill.

Food stamps are the first defense against hunger, and this Farm Bill makes them stronger.

The Food Research and Action Center joins these members of Congress in urging that we pass the Farm Bill now.

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The **Food Research and Action Center** (www.frac.org) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition.