



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

September 19, 2018

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow,

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is currently serving many of our state's friends, neighbors, congregants, and employees who are impacted by low incomes. As bishops, we represent the congregants and communities in every corner of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Wisconsin. We hear their needs regarding the farm bill.

Many of our congregations are already extremely generous through their outreach programs to address hunger in their communities. In addition, we have congregants who are teachers with countless examples of children finding their primary nourishment through school meals, as well as stories from others who have themselves at some point struggled to provide enough for their families to eat, or who currently work with vulnerable populations.

Every day, we see firsthand how federal nutrition programs via the farm bill work to ensure that Michigan families, children, and seniors have a modest nutrition safety net to help provide hope and a springboard for them to capitalize on opportunities and build a better life. The ELCA believes in caring for one another as brothers and sisters, and we make up one body. When one part is not tended to, the whole body suffers.

"...so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. For the body is not one member, but many." 1 Corinthians 12:26

According to the Food Research Action Network, the House version of the farm bill (H.R. 2) "would cause more than 1 million low-income households with more than 2 million people — particularly low-income working families with children — to lose their benefits altogether or have them reduced." Michigan would cut out at least 45,000 individuals from SNAP; that includes children and seniors. As you negotiate as a conferee on a new farm bill, we ask that you stand up for Michigan residents and Americans facing food insecurity by supporting a farm bill that protects SNAP. Thank you for your recent work on the senate farm bill!

The federal nutrition programs authorized and funded through the farm bill are a key part of how we as a society honor this shared commitment and promise to take care of all our neighbors. The Senate version of the bill keeps intact the already successful SNAP program. While we agree that a good job is the best way to fight hunger and poverty – and furthermore, that job training can be an effective method of improving the skills of job seekers – the overly broad and untargeted work requirements in the House bill are not the most effective way to accomplish this goal.

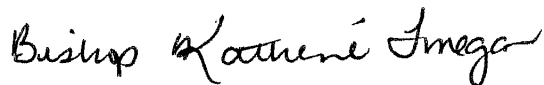
Federal nutrition programs, like SNAP provide broad, means-tested support to ensure all Americans living near or below the poverty line receive basic assistance. The Senate farm bill would improve SNAP by strengthening support for workers and employers, maintain SNAP's already strong work requirements, and make commonsense improvements to strengthen program integrity and reduce fraud. These provisions would improve SNAP without sacrificing access for children, families, veterans, seniors and people with disabilities.

The Senate version of the farm bill keeps SNAP strong, effective, and accessible, and does not heap unnecessary administrative costs onto our government. It ensures that all families facing hunger have the nutrition they need to work, learn, and live healthier lives, and it should be the framework that Congress supports.

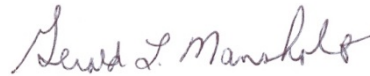
We ask that you commit to working toward a strong, bipartisan farm bill that protects and strengthens SNAP and other nutrition programs. Thank you for your service and your consideration of your request for a farm bill that reflects the protections of SNAP in the Senate version.

Thank you for your consideration.

With respect,



Bishop Katherine Finegan
Northern Great Lakes Synod
(Includes entire Upper Peninsula of Michigan)



Bishop Gerald Mansholt
East Central Synod of Wisconsin



Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson
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