

June __, 2015

The Honorable _____
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative _____:

On behalf of _____, I write to urge your strong support to protect the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Food and Shelter Program's (EFSP) allocation, when the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee considers its spending bill for fiscal year 2016.

Congress established the EFSP program in 1983, after the severe Recession of 1982. It is the first federal response to assist the newly unemployed and working poor from falling into chronic homelessness and food insecurity. EFSP program funds are used to provide meals, lodging, rent/mortgage payments, and essential utility payments for people facing emergency economic disasters.

The program is expansive in its reach. EFSP has served over 14,000 human service agencies in more than 2,500 communities across the country through a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors. FEMA works with representatives of the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities USA, The Jewish Federations of North America, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, The Salvation Army and United Way Worldwide, in administering the program.

Over the years, EFSP has been assessed to be a highly regarded and well run program by Congress, the Administration, and program providers and clients. It operates efficiently, with strong oversight and low administrative costs. Yet, the program's allocation was severely cut by 40% beginning in FY 2011 (from \$200 million to \$120 million). The cut resulted in 500 fewer jurisdictions and 2,800 fewer human services agencies being able to participate in the program. Next month, the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee will consider cutting the EFSP allocation by an additional \$20 million (17%).

The cut is not justified. In May 2007, just prior to the 2007-2009 "Great Recession", the number of unemployed persons was 6.8 million, the number of involuntary part-time workers was 4.5 million, and the number of job seekers who had not looked for work in May (and therefore were not counted as unemployed) was 1.4 million. In post-recession May 2015, the number of unemployed was 8.7 million, the number of involuntary part-time workers was 6.7 million, and the number of job seekers who had not looked for work during the month (and therefore were not counted as unemployed) was 1.9 million. In every demonstrable category, the employment situation was significantly worse in May 2015. Yet, Congress allocated more than \$151 million to EFSP in FY 2007, and is considering cutting the program to \$100 million in FY 2016.

If the proposed \$20 million cut was adopted, when adjusted for inflation, the amount would equate to the lowest allocation in EFSP's history, and would result in the provision of 10.8 million fewer meals, 730 thousand fewer nights of lodging, 9 thousand fewer rent/mortgage assistance payments, and 27 thousand fewer utility payments in fiscal year 2016.

As the challenges to the economy continue for America's unemployed and working poor, we respectfully urge you to call upon Homeland Security Appropriations Chairman John Carter and Ranking Member Lucille Roybal-Allard to fund the EFSP program at the flat level of \$120 million in FY 2016.

Sincerely,