

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2011

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Member of Congress
2135 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Clyburn,

As the Select Committee on Deficit Reduction begins to meet and consider ways to achieve the federal deficit goals set out in the Budget Control Act, we write to request that the Committee's decisions protect critical programs for low-income families – particularly our nation's anti-hunger programs. Specifically, we respectfully ask that the Committee reject policy choices that would risk increasing hunger or poverty in America.

Last December, President Obama's bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, headed by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, developed deficit reduction recommendations to reduce the federal deficit that adhered to a guiding principle of not increasing poverty or income inequality. The Commission's final recommendations would reduce the deficit by \$4 trillion over 10 years, without any cuts to our nation's critical non-health safety net entitlement programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the child nutrition programs.

Furthermore, this summer, the Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Six" deficit reduction plan also reduced the deficit by \$4 trillion over ten years without cuts to the core low-income entitlement programs. In fact, this plan explicitly precluded the Agriculture Committee from reducing SNAP in meeting its target for deficit reduction.

These plans demonstrate that major deficit reduction can be achieved in a bipartisan manner and without harming vulnerable families by cutting key nutrition and other critical low-income assistance programs. In fact, every major deficit reduction package since 1985 has exempted low-income entitlement programs from cuts, and some of these packages have even contained provisions that *reduced* poverty and inequality.

As you know, an automatic sequester will be enacted should an agreement on at least \$1.2 trillion in deficit reduction not be reached. The Budget Control Act spells out which programs are subject to the sequester and which programs will be excluded from any across-the-board cuts. We are relieved that all low-income entitlement programs, including the nutrition programs, will be excluded from any sequester, although we are disappointed that several critical discretionary anti-hunger programs are exposed. Such a sequester – in addition to the already

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