



September 29th, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the Alliance to End Hunger, I am writing to urge you to avoid a government shutdown and pass a bipartisan Continuing Resolution (CR) that protects life-saving food security and nutrition programs in the U.S. and around the world.

A shutdown would not only be detrimental to all sectors of the economy but would disproportionately Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

A shutdown would threaten the crucial nutrition assistance and other vital maternal health services of nearly 7 million women and children that rely on WIC. The federal contingency fund for supporting normal WIC operations would likely run out in a matter of days to weeks. The vast majority of WIC participants in each state would experience a significant reduction and/or elimination of their benefits. If a shutdown occurs, any federal reserves for the program that is left over at a state level will continue to be distributed until it is exhausted.

A shutdown would also impose an additional burden on administering and operating WIC at the federal level. This will create negative ripple effects for state agencies trying to determine how to operationalize with limited funding. This shutdown also jeopardizes the 25-year legacy of bipartisan commitment to the program fully serving all eligible applicants.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Although SNAP is a mandatory program, funding is provided by annual appropriations. If Congress fails to pass a CR, the ability for the government to disperse SNAP benefits could be negatively affected. The USDA may be able to continue SNAP operations for a limited period using reserve funding, but it is not certain how much is available in contingency funds. SNAP, serving about 41 million people, who are primarily children, elderly and disabled, would only be funded through October 2023. It is uncertain how long after the shutdown benefits will be available, which may put millions of SNAP participants at risk of losing benefits and having to go to food banks, that are already facing increased burden.

Commodity Food Programs

Although food banks would see greater demands for food during a shutdown, they will not be able to adequately serve their communities. The food bank network cannot fill the gap for SNAP cuts and is already struggling under the current demand for food assistance in communities nationwide. Food banks will not receive The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funds for fiscal year 2024 or storage

and distribution funding for TEFAP and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). This will prevent food banks from placing new food orders and being forced to cancel existing orders.

Additionally, food deliveries and administrative funds for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) could be disrupted. During previous shutdowns, FDPIR sites facing funding gaps were forced to furlough workers, which had a cascading impact that interrupted culturally-sensitive food deliveries and distributions to individuals and families.

Meals on Wheels

A shutdown of any length could severely impact our nation's most vulnerable older adults facing hunger and isolation. Federal funding to Meals on Wheels could be delayed, which could force the program to reduce, delay, or suspend services altogether. As standing, MOW currently has an average waiting list of three months for vital meals for seniors. Due to insufficient funding, MOW has been forced to make unfeasible choices such as suspending meal services, expanding waiting lists, reducing the number of meals and/or delivery days, and even closing doors altogether. This would be further exacerbated if the government shuts down and funding isn't available to states to run the program.

USAID

At a time of unprecedented levels of hunger and malnutrition, now is not the time to delay critically needed life-saving assistance. A shutdown jeopardizes lives around the world. If there was a sudden onset emergency, USAID would be unable to sufficiently respond. A government shutdown could leave hundreds of thousands of people who are dependent on U.S. assistance at risk of hunger and malnutrition. USAID would need to cut back its services in a shutdown, reducing their ability to carry out time-sensitive activities.

In countries where the U.S. Feed the Future initiative operates investments in agriculture, research and nutrition have helped lift more than 23 million people above the poverty line and generated nearly \$18 billion in agricultural sales. Feed the Future has also enabled smallholder farmers to access climate-resilient inputs in areas that are subject to extreme climate shocks. A government shutdown jeopardizes the effectiveness of this program and other global agricultural initiatives in the midst of a global food crisis.

A government shutdown would increase hunger, and we urge Congress to take immediate action to avoid negative impacts on millions of food insecure people. Congress must pass a temporary spending bill before the deadline to avoid undue consequences in the U.S. and around the world.

Respectfully,



Eric Mitchell
Executive Director
Alliance to End Hunger