

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEW CONGRESS MUST PROTECT ANTI-HUNGER AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

As new Congress takes office, lawmakers must protect school meals, WIC, food stamps, and other critical programs that help create a healthy, hunger-free Arizona

PHOENIX -- The Association of Arizona Food Banks (AAFB) calls the 115th Congress, sworn in today in Washington, D.C., to recommit itself to ending hunger in America by strengthening federal nutrition programs.

“As lawmakers take their oaths of office, we call on them – and the Arizona’s delegation in particular – to strengthen federal nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, and national schools meals programs,” said Angie Rodgers, President and CEO of AAFB. “Some Members of Congress have proposed block granting nutrition programs– we can’t let that happen. Such proposals would be a disaster for Arizona’s children, seniors, working families, and people with disabilities.”

AAFB also calls on Members of Congress to oppose efforts that would repeal nutrition standards for healthy school meals which have been shown to improve children’s health and learning. “Members of both parties have long agreed that school meals help local agriculture and support children’s education and health,” said Rodgers. “Calls for bringing junk food back into schools make no sense.”

Food insecurity is a problem nationwide, but the effects are particularly dire in Arizona:

- 1 in 4 children, nearly 1 in 5 adults, and 1 in 7 seniors in Arizona are food insecure
- 434,000 Arizona kids – enough to fill the University of Phoenix Stadium six times – are food insecure
- Arizona ranks 3rd in the nation for worst child food insecurity rates
- Apache County has the highest rate of child food insecurity in the nation

Hunger in Arizona would be even worse were it not for federal nutrition programs that are critical in keeping Arizonans healthy:

- Every month, nearly 1 million Arizonans rely on SNAP to maintain adequate diets
- 63 percent of SNAP recipients are children, seniors, or people with disabilities
- 220,000 Arizonans were lifted out of poverty by SNAP in 2015

- 640,000 Arizona students eat lunch through the National School Lunch Program daily
- 150,000 Arizonan mothers, children, and infants rely on WIC to maintain nutritionally adequate diets required for healthy development in the critical first years of life

AAFB and anti-hunger advocates will fight back against attempts to block grant nutrition programs; make it harder for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and the working poor to access food; or in any way diminish efforts to reduce hunger, improve health and support learning.

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About the Association of Arizona Food Banks

Established in 1984, the Association of Arizona Food Banks is a private, non-profit organization serving five-member regional food banks (Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Desert Mission Food Bank, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, United Food Bank, Yuma Community Food Bank) and a network of nearly 1,200 food pantries and agencies. AAFB is one of the first state associations in the nation and an inaugural partner state association of Feeding America. AAFB was instrumental in the development of a statewide gleaning project, and our advocacy efforts have brought about beneficial state and federal legislation for our member food banks and the people they serve. For more information, to find a food bank or pantry in your area, or to learn more about donation and volunteer opportunities, please visit www.azfoodbanks.org.

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