



AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number: 20180312-5ii4a

Support for US Conference of Mayor's Recommendations for Farm Bill

WHEREAS, Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2017 data show that over 16% of Travis County adults and over 22% of Travis County children face food insecurity, and fall short of meeting their weekly food budget; and

WHEREAS, chronic, diet-related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes continue to be leading causes of death in Travis County, and

WHEREAS, 30-40% of all food in the US is wasted each year from farms, retail centers, restaurants, food service institutions, and manufacturers with estimates as high as 133 billion pounds per year; and

WHEREAS, this year's Farm Bill reauthorization presents an opportunity to promote food security and the health of our residents, as well as to fuel economic growth and protect our environment; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin's Mayor, Steve Alder, sign onto the US Conference of Mayor's Letter of Recommendations for the 2018 US Farm Bill.

Date of Approval: March 12th, 2018

Record of the vote: 10 in favor, none opposed

Attached: Draft USCM Letter

Attest:

City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, Food Policy Manager/ ATCFPB Staff Liaison

March 15, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Mayors, the undersigned mayors ask that as you consider the 2018 Farm Bill, you maintain or enhance existing urban food and nutrition programs that have had an impact on cities across the country. We believe that this year's Farm Bill reauthorization presents an opportunity to promote food security and the health of our residents, as well as to fuel economic growth and protect our environment. As Mayors, we see each of these aims as critical to the long-term well-being of our residents. We urge the Committees to:

- *Maintain the current benefit levels and program design of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).* This program is critical to the food security of struggling families in our cities, and is especially so for families which include vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and people with disabilities. We strongly oppose proposals to cut program funding or restructure the program through block grants or other means. Instead, the Committees should take three actions to enhance SNAP's effectiveness:
 - *Expressly reauthorize the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI).* FINI directly enhances the SNAP program's ability to support our cities' health initiatives. By increasing the accessibility of healthy fruits and vegetables for SNAP beneficiaries, and thereby reducing consumption of unhealthy products such as like soda or junk food, FINI helps achieve goals such as reducing obesity and the incidence of food-related chronic disease.
 - *Protect and support continued innovation in the SNAP Nutrition Education and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.* These programs empower low-income Americans to make healthy choices on a limited budget, thereby advancing local and national health goals.
 - *Increase access to SNAP EBT technology at farmers' markets, farm stands, online grocery services, and other non-traditional food retailers.* In addition to increasing

access to healthy fruits and vegetables for low-income Americans, this advances city initiatives to support farmers and small and local businesses.

- Further promote food security, nutrition, and health amongst vulnerable populations by:
 - *Increasing mandatory commodities provided by The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and maintaining authorized funding levels for TEFAP storage and distribution.*
 - *Maintaining authorized funding levels for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and supporting CSFP nationwide.*
 - *Protecting and maintaining current funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.*
 - *Reauthorizing the Healthy Food Financing Initiative.*
- *Incorporate the following principles into the final bill:*
 - *Protect Urban Agriculture:* Urban agriculture projects in our cities help to bring nourishing food, economic prosperity, and food education to residents; in some cases, they also help to reduce urban blight. This bill would enhance cities' abilities to implement such projects by enabling USDA support.
 - *Support Local and Regional Markets:* Promoting local and regional food supply and consumption helps cities to boost local economies and to promote environmental sustainability and the health of residents. This bill would help achieve these goals through a combination of regulatory relief and financial support, and it would also create a Produce Prescription Program, which has been locally tested with great success in the District of Columbia.
 - *Support Young Farmers:* The aging of America's farming population, and the need to recruit young people to the farming and ranching professions, is a well-recognized issue. These bills would provide critical supports to encourage and empower new entrants into these professions, thereby supporting urban agriculture projects in cities as well as development in the rural areas that feed our cities.
 - *Support Farm to School Programs:* USDA's Farm to School Grant Program, established by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, has been tremendously popular, with demand more than five times higher than available funding. This bill would expand upon this success, enabling cities to continue enhancing youth nutrition education and supporting the local economy by increasing the use of local foods in schools.
 - *Support Closing the Meal Gap:* As noted previously, SNAP is critical to food security, health, and equity goals in all our cities. However, in many cases the average benefit of less than \$1.39 per person per meal is not sufficient, leading recipients to struggle to consistently maintain an adequate and nutritious diet. This bill would increase the adequacy of SNAP benefits.
 - *Support Food Waste Elimination:* Food waste is expensive and is both a food access and an environmental sustainability issue. Edible food should go to hungry people, not to the landfill. This bill would take comprehensive steps to reduce the food waste problem.

We recognize the great challenges you face in crafting legislation which meets the diverse needs of so many Americans. Nonetheless, we believe that your objectives can be met while protecting the most vulnerable citizens in our cities and improving our collective food system.

We have been active in our own communities to achieve these goals through diverse and innovative programs, and we are available as resources for you during this process. We thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Muriel Bowser
Mayor
City of Washington
Co-Chair, Food Policy Task Force

Paul Soglin
Mayor
City of Madison
Co-Chair, Food Policy
Task Force

Mayors