

July XX, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Glenn “G.T.” Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman and Ranking Member Scott,

We write today to show our strong support for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) and request that you consider strengthening and expanding the program in the 2023 Farm Bill. GusNIP’s nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs help people with low incomes purchase more fruits and vegetables while supporting farmers and contributing to a broader economic impact.

Since its first iteration as the Healthy Incentives Pilot in 2008, GusNIP has proven to successfully expand access to and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables. In fact, people who use nutrition incentives eat more fruits and vegetables than the average American¹ and improve their overall nutrition security². Studies of produce prescription programs found consistent improvement of diet-related health issues including diabetes and glucose control³ and several studies have identified impacts matching or even surpassing the effects of prescription drug therapies for cardiometabolic health.⁴

¹ Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE): Impact Finding. Available at <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/2uwlf3ch/gusnip-y3-impact-findings-report.pdf>

² Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE): Impact Finding. Available at <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/2uwlf3ch/gusnip-y3-impact-findings-report.pdf>

³ Veldheer S, Scartozzi C, Knehans A, et al. A Systematic Scoping Review of How Healthcare Organizations Are Facilitating Access to Fruits and Vegetables in Their Patient Populations. *J Nutr* 2020;150:2859-73.

⁴ Haslam A, Gill J, Taniguchi T, Love C, Jernigan VB. The effect of food prescription programs on chronic disease management in primarily low-income populations: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Nutr Health*. 2022 Feb 2:2601060211070718. doi: 10.1177/02601060211070718. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 35108144. 10. Veldheer S, Scartozzi C, Bordner CR, Opara C, Williams B, Weaver L, Rodriguez D, Berg A, Sciamanna C. Impact of a Prescription Produce Program on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Risk Outcomes. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2021 Dec;53(12):1008-1017. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2021.07.005. Epub 2021 Aug 20. PMID: 34426064. 11. Veldheer S, Scartozzi C, Knehans A, et al. A Systematic Scoping Review of How Healthcare Organizations Are Facilitating Access to Fruits and Vegetables in Their Patient Populations. *J Nutr* 2020;150:2859-73. 12. Bhat S, Coyle DH, Trieu K, et al. Healthy Food Prescription Programs and their Impact on Dietary Behavior and Cardiometabolic Risk Factors: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Advances in Nutrition* 2021.

In addition to nutrition benefits, GusNIP generates significant returns to food producers and local economies. Findings show that this economic impact continues to grow over time. In 2022, incentive spending at local food retailers generated an economic impact of approximately \$85M – a 107% increase from 2021.⁵ With increased investment, we can build on this established momentum.

GusNIP represents the only federal program with dedicated resources for SNAP families to access fruits and vegetables. In order to benefit more local economies and help more families improve dietary quality, GusNIP needs to evolve and grow so it can reach its full potential. We applaud the historic bipartisan support that allowed GusNIP to grow from a pilot program to a mandatory baseline funded program in the farm bill over the course of several years. As you write the 2023 Farm Bill, we urge you to continue this bipartisan effort and respectfully request the following changes to ensure the continued success of GusNIP:

- **Invest in GusNIP** in a way that can meaningfully equip more people with low incomes with purchase power to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, while also growing revenue for farmers and food businesses.
- **Reduce or eliminate the non-government match requirement**, especially for pilot-sized grants.
- Create a new USDA **grant tier/cooperative agreement** to scale incentives statewide and prioritize grants for fruit and vegetable incentive projects that work in a variety of retail settings, including independent retailers and farmers markets.
- Maintain produce prescriptions (PRx) as a component of the program while implementing a **separate grant proposal review panel**, as well as a **new two-tiered grant structure** to expedite utilization of PRx in standard clinical and care management workflows through infrastructure and study design.
- Additional national consensus positions for GusNIP improvements available at: www.fruitvegincentives.org/farmbill

More than 40 million Americans participate in SNAP and still struggle to provide adequate nutritious food to feed their families. GusNIP's success is contingent on SNAP, and every SNAP dollar spent on fruits and vegetables will have an outsized economic and health benefit when paired with GusNIP. Any additional resources that Congress provides for GusNIP must be additive to a strong SNAP program and we respectfully oppose any cuts to SNAP.

As we work together to address issues of hunger, nutrition, and the impacts of diet-related diseases, GusNIP is a proven and viable solution. With robust funding and improvements to support the partners who deliver this program, GusNIP can expand its reach to help even more American farmers, grocers, and families experiencing poverty nationwide.

Sincerely,

⁵ Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE). (2022). Year 3 Impact Findings. Available at <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/2uwlf3ch/gusnip-y3-impact-findings-report.pdf>

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Heart Association

Bread for the World

Council for a Strong America

Farmers Market Coalition

Fair Food Network

International Fresh Produce Association

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

National Grocers Association

National Produce Prescription Collaborative

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Save the Children

Union of Concerned Scientists

Wholesome Wave

Feeding Florida

The Food Trust

Hunger Free Oklahoma

Iowa Healthiest State Initiative

Nourish Colorado

SPUR

Sustainable Food Center