



## Fruit and Vegetable Incentives

### **GusNIP Support Letters to the Editor Templates and Op-Ed Outline**

Please use the guidance and templates below to help your organization, members, and partners submit letters to the editor and op-eds in local newspapers in support of the coalition's GusNIP priorities in the Farm Bill. If you have any questions or would like support with pitching, please reach out to [FairFood@signaldc.com](mailto:FairFood@signaldc.com) for support.

Here are the states we recommend targeting. It is helpful if the author who is signing their name to the piece is from the community where the outlet is located:

**Arkansas**  
**Michigan**  
**Delaware**  
**New Jersey**  
**Connecticut**  
**Minnesota**  
**Iowa**  
**Pennsylvania**  
**New York**  
**Georgia**  
**Kansas**  
**Alabama**  
**Kentucky**  
**Oklahoma**  
**Nebraska**

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#### **Letters to the Editor:**

Letters to the Editor are written to the editor of a newspaper, often as a response to a recent article or news topic of interest to the publication's readers and community. Letters are preferably between 150- 250 words, concise, and offer an opinion on the subject. ***Please be sure to check the publication's specific submission standards, word limits, and guidelines before submitting as they vary from publication to publication.***

Some publications prefer that letters be written in response to a specific article they have recently published, so we suggest keeping an eye out for articles about food access, hunger, nutrition, healthy eating, local food systems, or the Farm Bill. If responding to an article, you should reference the headline of the article in the opening line of your letter and try to submit it

within 72 hours of the piece's publication. The sooner you send your submission, the more likely it is to get published.

If there hasn't been any recent relevant coverage, many publications will still consider letters written about a topic of interest, especially if it is an issue of local concern, penned by a local author, and affects the community at large.

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**Letter to the Editor Templates:**

**Congress Can Help Boost Farmers' Income while Helping [STATE] Families Eat Healthier**

Right now, Congress has a big opportunity to expand access to healthy food for families in [STATE], improve public health, and generate big returns for farmers and local economies. The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program in the federal Farm Bill can do all three, but only if our lawmakers take action.

This program has gone to work for our state by investing in [State Incentive Program Name], which helps people or families who buy their groceries using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to match their purchases of fruits and vegetables. Here's how it works: when a program participant buys \$1 worth of produce with their SNAP dollars, they earn \$1 in return to buy more fruits and vegetables. They can use their SNAP benefits towards bringing home more healthy food – it also means farmers and food retailers are making more sales, which creates a significant economic ripple effect. In 2022 alone, these programs generated an impact of [approximately \\$85 million](#).

It's a program that works. Families who participate in nutrition incentive programs are eating more nutritious food. [A recent analysis](#) shows that people who utilize nutrition incentives eat more fruit and vegetables compared to the average American.

As Congress works to pass a new Farm Bill, [LAWMAKER'S NAME] can support changes to expand and improve the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program so that it can reach more communities and help more farmers in [STATE/COMMUNITY].

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**[STATE'S] Members of Congress Can Help Both Families and Farmers in the Farm Bill**

Too many families in [STATE/COMMUNITY] struggle to put enough food on the table—especially healthy food. Fortunately, Congress has an opportunity to improve healthy food access and support local farmers at the same time.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program in the federal Farm Bill invests in local initiatives like [State Incentive Program Name], which provides a [dollar-for-dollar match/discount] when a [STATE DENONMYN (i.e. Floridian, Michigander, etc.)] uses their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase produce at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. The program also supports Produce Prescriptions that allows healthcare providers to prescribe food as medicine to their patients. Through the program, healthcare providers provide patients with [vouchers] that can be used to buy fruits and vegetables.

This has helped [COMMUNITY NAME] families bring home more nutritious food so they can lead healthier lives. **A recent analysis** shows that people who participate in nutrition incentive programs eat more fruit and vegetables compared to the average American. At the same time, farmers are benefitting from more sales of the food they grow.

Right now, Congress is working to pass a new Farm Bill and [STATE/COMMUNITY'S] lawmakers can take action to expand and improve the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program so that more food retailers in our state can offer incentives in their community. As a longstanding champion for [STATE/COMMUNITY'S] farmers and families, I encourage [LAWMAKER'S NAME] to support changes to grow the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program so that it can reach its full potential.

### **Op-Eds:**

Op-eds are written for the opinion section of a news outlet to provide a unique perspective on a topical issue that affects their readership. Op-eds are typically between 500-750 words, persuasive, and clearly communicate a unique opinion or argument on the topic. **Please be sure to check the publication's specific submission standards, word limits, and guidelines before submitting as they vary publication to publication.**

Unlike a Letter to the Editor, op-eds often undergo more rigorous submission standards and publications publish less of them. Outlets often prefer op-eds from local authors with prominence or credibility who can give insight to complicated problems and present an original argument about their topic. The more original and localized your argument and thoughts are, the more likely your op-ed will be published.

It is important to note that op-eds can be subject to suggestions and changes by the opinion editor of the outlet of your choice.

## **Op-Ed Outline:**

### **Paragraph 1: Introduction**

- Start off the op-ed with a strong lead that demonstrates how nutrition incentives have benefitted your community and introduce the need to improve and expand GusNIP in the Farm Bill to help your community.
  - (e.g., Now more than ever, families in our community need access to healthy food OR another angle about how a lack of funding for nutrition incentives has made it challenging for incentives to meet the current demand.)

### **Paragraph 2: What is GusNIP/what does it look like in your state?**

- Provide background information about what GusNIP is and how it has invested in successful nutrition incentives programs/produce prescriptions in your state.
- Segue into the story you briefed at the beginning and tie it to the “why” of GusNIP.
- **Example paragraph:**

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) in the federal Farm Bill is a proven solution to improve healthy food access across [State] and help people who participate in GusNIP nutrition incentive programs eat more fruits and vegetables. Nutrition incentive programs have demonstrated successful public-private partnerships that have helped families using SNAP or produce prescriptions bring home more nutritious food and sparked economic opportunities for farmers and communities across the country.

In [State], GusNIP has [insert state specific data nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions have had on families’ health and communities’ economic growth.]

### **Paragraphs 3-5: What impact has GusNIP had in your state?**

- Provide context for how GusNIP has long been considered a multi-win solution that is benefiting families, improving public health, and generating returns for farmers and economies:
- **Example paragraph:**

GusNIP has helped families living in under resourced communities access and afford more healthy food in our community. Roughly 90% of Americans do not eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables needed to maintain a healthy diet, which is particularly challenging for people with low income, who say their primary barrier to eating healthier is affording healthy food. [A recent analysis](#) shows that people who participate in nutrition incentive programs eat more fruit and vegetables compared to the average American, while improving their food security.

GusNIP is a transformative force in public health, enabling more Americans to access healthier food options that improve health outcomes. Produce prescriptions are helping to expand food as medicine, with impacts rivaling prescription therapies for

heart health and offering new hope for improving diabetes.

It also generates a powerful ripple effect through local economies, benefiting farmers and businesses alike. The economic impact of GusNIP has been considerable, generating [approximately \\$85 million in 2022](#), a 107% increase from the previous year.

### **Paragraphs 6-7: The opportunity and momentum to grow GusNIP in the Farm Bill**

- Highlight how Congress can take action to help the program reach its full potential in the upcoming Farm Bill.

- **Example paragraphs:**

In order to ensure that nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions are able to reach more families and help more farmers in our state, Congress must take action in the upcoming Farm Bill to improve and expand GusNIP. [Over 600 farm, food, and health leaders](#) support changes to strengthen nutrition incentives, including a significant investment to expand the program across more food retailers and a reduction of burdensome matching requirements to enable more partners to participate.

Fortunately, we are seeing bipartisan ideas for how we can strengthen GusNIP so that it can reach more people. Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol have seen the potential to incorporate commonsense updates in the next Farm Bill that will help nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions benefit more farmers and families in our state. Legislation such as the [GusNIP Improvement Act](#), [GusNIP Expansion Act](#), and the Opt for Health with SNAP ([OH SNAP](#)) Act include important provisions that can be folded into the Farm Bill to make nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions work better for farmers, families, retailers, and local economies.

### **Conclusion and Call to Action:**

- Finish strong with a specific ask. Consider tying this paragraph back to the anecdote you opened with.
- **Example call to action:**

As Congress works to pass a new Farm Bill, [\[STATE/COMMUNITY'S\]](#) lawmakers can take action to expand and improve GusNIP so that [more food retailers in our state can offer these initiatives to families in need.] [\[STATE/COMMUNITY\]](#) is fortunate to have [\[LAWMAKER'S NAME\(S\)\]](#), who [has/have] been [a] longstanding champion[s] for our farmers and families. I encourage [\[LAWMAKER\(s\)\]](#) to build on that legacy and support changes to grow GusNIP so that it can reach its full potential.