

# Faith-based groups urge support for nutrition programs

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The Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and Fellowship Southwest are among more than 250 faith-based organizations in Texas that urged Congress to pass a robust Farm Bill that includes strong support for nutrition programs.

They joined the Feeding Texas network of food banks and church-based and community-supported food pantries from around the state—including at least 20 affiliated with Baptist congregations—in signing the Dec. 13 letter to members of Congress from Texas.

Specifically, the groups called on Congress to support the nutrition section in the Farm Bill that reauthorizes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

“The level of need is far too great for food banks and the faith community to tackle alone. We need support from lawmakers. Together, the Feeding Texas network and faith-based organizations across the state are urging elected officials to reauthorize a bipartisan Farm Bill package that strengthens SNAP and TEFAP while protecting investments already made in these critical hunger-fighting programs,” said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding Texas.

In November, Congress passed a short-term budget deal that included a one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, which expired Sept. 30. Members of Congress already are negotiating what will be included in a new Farm Bill.

“Our various faith traditions are united in the belief that providing food for

the hungry is a moral imperative. Our faith also calls on us to extend daily support to those pushed to the margins by ensuring that everyone in our communities has enough to eat,” the letter stated.

While faith-based organizations regularly provide food and other assistance to meet the urgent needs of individuals and families, the government also has a responsibility to address the problem of food insecurity, the organizations noted.

“Without a strong network of publicly funded nutrition programs, the philanthropic resources that support our work are not enough to allow us to help those in need overcome crisis and transition to stability,” the letter stated.

The faith-based groups noted a [Map the Meal Gap study by Feeding America](#) showing more than 4 million Texans—including 1.35 million children—live in food-insecure households.

Food insecurity refers to the inability of households to acquire food, at times, for one or more household members.

A recent [U.S. Department of Agriculture report](#) revealed Texas has the [second-highest rate of food insecurity](#) in the nation.

“The 2023 Farm Bill offers a critical opportunity to address food insecurity and poverty in Texas,” the letter to Congress stated.

Strengthening programs such as SNAP and TEFAP can “help more families put food on their tables and prioritize equitable food access for all,” the letter continued.

“TEFAP enables our state’s food banks and pantries to keep their shelves stocked with nutritious foods while also supporting our farming communities. SNAP empowers Texas families to stretch their food budgets,

particularly during times of food price inflation and when they are facing tough circumstances,” the letter stated.