



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

July 2, 2007

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Chairman, Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member, Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

As you prepare to reauthorize the Farm Bill, we ask for your support for proposals that are of particular concern to New York City. These proposals are critical as our City works to support low-income working families.

As part of our recently created Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), we have developed a coordinated agenda for improving the access of low-income New Yorkers to work supports, such as food stamp benefits, and to healthier foods, as we provide additional support to help them out of poverty. The Farm Bill also contains important conservation provisions that will affect the City's ability to protect our water supply and achieve the goals of PlaNYC, our recently released long term environmental sustainability plan.

We ask you to support the following:

- **Improve the Food Stamp Program:**

1. *Update Resource Limits and the Minimum Allotment:* Critical aspects of the Food Stamp program have not been adjusted for inflation in more than 20 years. We request Congress to increase the resource limit to \$4,000 per household and \$6,000 for households that include an elderly person, and exclude retirement accounts from this limit, in order to reflect current financial realities and encourage savings that are essential for families trying to lift themselves out of poverty. We also recommend an increase in the minimum monthly allotment to at least \$25.
2. *Simplify and Improve Administration:* The following proposals will create a more efficient, effective Food Stamp Program that remains well protected against fraud, and is more accessible to working families for whom "time is money." We propose a standard deduction for medical expenses, and simplification of the utility allowance

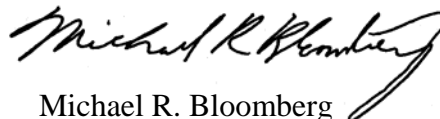
deduction. We also request that Congress restore full federal reimbursement for TANF-related Food Stamp administrative costs to return to a true 50/50 partnership between federal and state governments.

3. *Support Proposals for a More Flexible Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP)*: FSNEP should support a wide range of programs for food stamp-eligible communities that would promote healthy eating and physical activity; unfortunately, current rules are excessively restrictive.
- **Increase Funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**: Because of increased costs and reductions in bonus commodities, we urge Congress to increase funding for TEFAP to \$250 million, with annual inflation adjustments.
 - **Fully Fund Programs to Promote Healthy Eating**: In the face of potentially devastating epidemics of obesity and diabetes – conditions that disproportionately affect low-income communities and may interfere with people’s ability to work – promoting access to healthy foods is a high priority. The WIC and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP), the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and the DoD Fresh program are important initiatives within the Farm Bill that have improved access to healthy foods within low-income communities.
 - **Maintain Funding for Conservation and Forestry Programs**. As detailed in PlaNYC, our new 30-year sustainability plan, the quality and security of our water supply is a critical priority for the City’s future. We request that Congress maintain or increase funding in important programs which protect our water supply, such as the Conservation Security Program, Conservation Reserve Programs, and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

We also urge you to oppose any efforts to limit the ability of state or local governments to regulate unhealthy trans-fats.

Representatives from my Administration will be reaching out to you soon to request a meeting. We look forward to working with you to produce a Farm Bill, and a Nutrition Title within it, that will promote a healthier, more sustainable future for New Yorkers and for all Americans.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

MRB:wd

cc: New York State Congressional Delegation