

April 11, 2022

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Hoeven:

On behalf of [UnidosUS](#), I write to urge you to craft and advance a Fiscal Year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations bill that reduces hunger and targets nutrition programs and supports to Latinos,¹ their families, and other Americans suffering from food insecurity.

UnidosUS, previously known as the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization and has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Latinos for more than 50 years. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers at the national and local levels.

It is time for Congress to deliver for our country's 62 million Latinos, who, for too long, have been disproportionately excluded from key federal priorities. According to U.S. Census data, nearly 16% of Latino households [reported](#) food insufficiency in October 2021 compared to only around 6% of non-Hispanic white households. According to our own [survey](#), 44% of Latino parents received some form of food assistance during the pandemic (including food banks, schools, churches, SNAP, or food stamps), and nearly 80% reported that this assistance helped a great deal. Even prior to the pandemic, federal food security programs were a lifeline for millions of Latinos. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps more than [6.5 million Latinos](#) put food on the table.

To support and enhance these vital programs, we urge you to deliver on your commitments to advance racial equity with your FY2023 budget proposal by supporting funding for critical nutrition programs:

- **\$5 million for SNAP Competitive Outreach Grants.** In 2009—the last year the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued competitive SNAP Outreach Grants—FNS provided over \$1 million to 14 organizations (with an average

¹ The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

grant of \$74,000) to conduct SNAP outreach to target populations. Funding in years prior was nearly [twice](#) that amount. For the majority of recipient organizations, outreach was routinely targeted to Hispanics or immigrants. These grants [helped](#) community and faith-based organizations implement and test innovative outreach strategies for underserved populations, including by engaging Latino media outlets and capacitating bilingual and bicultural outreach specialists.

Food insecurity has risen dramatically as a result of the pandemic, with Hispanic households far [more likely](#) to be food insecure than the national average. Even prior to the pandemic, 6.5 million Latinos [relied](#) on the program and as many as 7 million Americans were [eligible](#) but unenrolled. Our recent poll [found](#) that 44% of Latino parents relied upon food assistance, including SNAP, during the pandemic (and a similar number [reported](#) cutting back spending on food). While the USDA's current Process and Technology Improvement Grants provide invaluable resources to improve these aspects of enrollment, re-funding the SNAP outreach grants will help support outreach to low-income, Latino, mixed-immigrant-status families, and other underserved populations.

- **Language Request: Plan for Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to Improve Adherence to and Awareness of the Tri-agency Guidance.** Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services and the Administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service shall submit to Congress a plan to increase state agencies' adherence to and awareness of the 2000 tri-agency [guidance](#) regarding inquiries into citizenship, immigration status, and Social Security Numbers for non-applicants.
 - Justification: We appreciate the USDA's recent efforts to inform states about the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) reversal of the public charge rule, as well as the recent [letter](#) the Food and Nutrition Service sent to all SNAP state agencies encouraging states to explore partnerships with community organizations that work with immigrant populations. The chilling effect that resulted from this rule and recent anti-immigrant rhetoric will persist for months and years to come. While 95% of Latino children are U.S. citizens, more than half live in mixed-status households with at least one non-citizen parent. Further increasing awareness about the federal Tri-Agency Guidance via webinar trainings or technical assistance with state agencies would help clarify nutrition program eligibility for mixed immigrant families.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support of critical appropriations legislation that would both fully and equitably include Latinos and benefit all Americans.

Sincerely,



Eric Rodriguez
Senior Vice President, Policy and Advocacy
UnidosUS