

Faith and Hunger Network
275 State St., Albany NY 12210 - (518) 434-7371

July 23, 2010

Dear NY Congressional Members:

We, as members of our state's various faith groups, are writing to urge you as members of Congress to fulfill your responsibility to help end hunger in our community. As an immediate step, we ask you to help reduce hunger among children and improve access to better nutrition by supporting an increase of at least \$4 billion annually in funding as part of the pending reauthorization of the federal child nutrition programs. We also urge you to pass this legislation during the current Congressional session.

All of our faiths speak to dignity of people in poverty in God's sight. Our traditions insist that it is society's responsibility to address and alleviate such inequities. Helping people in need is a matter of fundamental principle, responsibility, righteousness and justice, not an act of charity.

Christians believe that God cares for hungry and poor people and that we all have been called to care for those who are hungry and poor. According to Jewish tradition, rabbis did not allow celebrations to begin until the community's poor and hungry people were seated and fed. Throughout the Bible we find the message that God intends for everyone to have enough, and that human beings have a responsibility to help shape the world as God intends. "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." (Proverbs 14:31)

So too in Islam where the Quran states, "And they give food, out of love for Him (Allah), to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We feed you for Allah's pleasure only- We desire from you neither reward nor thanks." (Quran 76:8-9) Or as the Hindu leader Narinder Kapoor wrote, "Rich people must share their wealth with their poor compatriot not as owner of wealth but just as trusteeship of wealth." Similar statements can be found in Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Confucian, Unitarian Universalist and other religious traditions.

The child nutrition programs – school lunch and breakfast, child care and WIC, summer feeding and afterschool snacks and meals – are facing a two part challenge: rising rates of hunger and obesity. The programs are not reaching all those children who are eligible. In addition, while the nutritional quality of the programs has improved significantly since Congress required that they follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, it is increasingly difficult for providers to meet these guidelines without additional resources.

The various child nutrition reauthorization proposals advanced in both Houses of Congress make important contributions to the effort to reduce hunger and improve nutrition among our children. Yet their promise cannot be achieved without providing additional funding. In these difficult and challenging economic times, Congress must re-evaluate its priorities to ensure that ending hunger receives the necessary funding. Now more than ever Congress should heed the warning that former President Eisenhower delivered more than half century ago, noting that "every bomb that is made, every rocket launched is a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed..."

In language that resonates with a deep understanding of religious values, former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." We urge you to take up this challenge.

In hope and justice,

Douglas J. Anderson
Church World Service/CROP Upstate NY Regional Director

Rev. Dr. Clinton A McCoy, Jr.
Executive for Partnerships, Synod of the Northeast, Presbyterian Church (USA)
President, New York State Council of Churches

Mr. Ian Leet, Chairperson, Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO)
Ecumenical Officer, Albany Synod, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Joel A. Gibson
Director, Faith Based Services, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, NY

Rev. John U. Miller, Pastor, Evangelical Protestant United Church of Christ
Executive Director, Capital Area Council of Churches, Albany

Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Executive Director
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition

Rev. Debra Jameson, Director
FOCUS Churches, Albany

Bishop Marie C. Jerge
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Upstate Synod, Camillus

Rev. Cass Shaw, Presbyter
Presbytery of Albany

The Rev. Thomas W. Goodhue, United Methodist
Long Island Council of Churches

Cristina Notaro, Chair
MICAHA (Mobilized Interfaith Coalition Against Hunger), Long Island

Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch
United Church of Christ, Sand Lake

Rev. Glenn D. Leupold
Presbyterian Church (USA), Albany

Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert
Unitarian Universalist minister, Rochester, NY, retired

Rev. Lois Ann Wolff, PC(U.S.A.)
Interim Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Albany

Damaris McGuire, Director
NYS Episcopal Public Policy Network

Rev. Alan G. Newton, Executive Minister - American Baptist Churches
Rochester/Genesee Region

Rev. Derrick L. Boykin
Pastor of Memorial Community Church, West Harrison

Mark Dunlea, Andreas Kriefall
Faith and Hunger Network, Hunger Action Network of New York State

Misha Marvel, MSW
Capital Region Ecumenical Organization

Sister Judy Fay
St. Raphael Parish Social Ministry (Roman Catholic), East Meadow

Rev. Dr. Femi Alabi
Bethel Of Praise Ministries, Brooklyn

Doreen Wohl, Executive Director, West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Church of St Paul And St Andrew United Methodist, New York

Dr. Roger G. Ellis
United Methodist Church, Granville, NY 12832

Judy Metzger, Greg Kay, Robert Ludwig
Hunger Outreach Committee of St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, NY

Christin Veech, Phyliss Anderson, Victor G. Pajares
Church and Community Committee, First Presbyterian, Smithtown

Barbara Zaron
Congregation Beth Emeth (Reform Jewish), Albany

Anne Cimino
LI Pax Christi

Mary Dewar
Garden City Community Church, UCC, Long Island

Ann Kansfield, Co-Pastor
Greenpoint Reformed Church, Brooklyn

Dawnelle Miller, Program Director
Bethlehem Assembly of God - House of God

Judy Metzger, Board Member
Church Women United of Erie County

Robb Smith, Unitarian Universalist, Wynantskill NY

Fr. Frederick P. Duncanson, MD

Jim Murphy, Roman Catholic, Scotia

Diane Elizabeth Serratore, Executive Director
People to People, Nanuet

Hans & Phil Franzen-Nicholson
Episcopal, Poughquag

Lynn Waterman
Catholic, Sand Lake