



Majority Leader Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As the leaders of food banks, food rescue groups, anti-hunger nonprofits, direct service organizations, food pantries, and soup kitchens, we write to urge you to expand AmeriCorps and Senior Corps in the next COVID-19 relief package.

Especially when coupled with an increase in federal food safety net programs, the targeted use of federal resources to enable more citizen service through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps is one of the most effective, cost-efficient, and rapid ways to enable the massive increase in capacity that anti-hunger nonprofit groups nationwide need to appropriately respond to the grave hunger crisis facing the nation.

In 2018, when the economy was still strong, 37 million Americans lived in food insecure homes. Since the COVID-19 crisis, the already high rates of domestic hunger have increased dramatically. Feeding America has estimated that an additional 17 million Americans may become food insecure as a result of the pandemic, bringing that number to 54 million, the highest level in recent times. With the current closure of most school meals programs and the drastic increase in unemployment, there is now a five-fold increase in child hunger. According to a Hunger Free America poll of 1,000 U.S. residents nationwide, 37 percent of parents report that they have been forced to cut portions or skip meals in order to feed their children.

When people are malnourished, that compromises their immune systems, so they are more likely to contract – and transmit – COVID 19. The hunger crisis is worsening the health crisis.

Many more families are turning to public and nonprofit food sources to make ends meet, and senior citizens, children and Americans with disabilities –who would have previously received food from other sources, are now relying on new government and nonprofit food distribution efforts. At the same time, food banks and other nonprofit groups are also struggling with diminished capacity as their volunteers –

many of whom are older Americans – are unable to continue their service because they are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

In times of crisis, national service members step forward to help communities respond and recover. In response to COVID-19, AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps members are fighting hunger in their communities. Diverse teams of national service members are responding to the pandemic by packing and delivering food, coordinating volunteers, and staffing drive-through food distribution sites that serve thousands. Many food charities rely on the added capacity that national service members provide in order to maintain operations and meet community need. AmeriCorps members are also supporting hungry families – and greatly reducing the burden on state and county social service agencies – by enabling nonprofit groups to ramp up their efforts to enable eligible households to receive aid through vital food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC.

Expanding the number of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members would provide critical increased capacity to address increased levels of need. We were pleased to see the introduction of The CORPS Act, a bipartisan proposal to leverage the existing national service infrastructure to expand AmeriCorps and strengthen Senior Corps to help our communities respond and recover; we hope that the provisions of that bill can be included in the next broad pandemic relief legislation.

On behalf of those we serve, we urge you to expand AmeriCorps and Senior Corps so we can tap the talent and energy of national service members to fight hunger in our communities at this critical time.

Sincerely,

Joel Berg, CEO, Hunger Free America, New York, New York

Lorianne Burhop, Chief Policy Officer, Montana Food Bank Network, Missoula, Montana

Robert Cordero, Executive Director, Grand Street Settlement, New York, New York

JC Dwyer, Chief Strategy Officer, Feeding Texas

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director, Ohio Association of Food Banks, Columbus, Ohio

Jason Jakubowski, President & CEO, Foodshare, Bloomfield, Connecticut

Korey Patty, Executive Director, Feeding Louisiana, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Derek Polka, Policy & Research Manager, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Los Angeles, California

Kurt Reiber, President & CEO, Freestore Foodbank, Cincinnati, Ohio

Mag Strittmatter, President & CEO, Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico

As of 6/8/20

cc: Chairman Lamar Alexander, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
Ranking Member Patty Murray, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
Chairman Bobby Scott, House Education and Labor Committee  
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, House Education and Labor Committee