

Written Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern (MA-02)  
**Testimony before the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee**  
March 26, 2019

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Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Fortenberry, and Members of the Agriculture Subcommittee – thank you for allowing me to testify before you today.

As your Subcommittee begins drafting the appropriations legislation, I strongly urge you to provide robust funding for programs that work to end hunger across our country.

As one of the richest countries in the history of the world, I find it unbelievable that 38 million Americans live in food insecure households. We have the power and the resources to end hunger in the United States. What we lack right now is the political will.

A few weeks ago, I testified before the House Budget Committee in support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, a mandatory program. I urged the Committee to protect the structure of SNAP, our nation’s first line of defense against hunger, and oppose any efforts to diminish participation of able-bodied adults without dependents.

Today, I urge this Committee to provide at least \$3 billion for the **SNAP contingency reserve account** to ensure that all participants have continued access to benefits even if the program incurs unanticipated expenses or events.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)** provides 6.8 million low-income pregnant and parenting women and children access to nutritious food, education, and other services. I strongly urge the Committee to continue to fully fund WIC at \$6.1 billion, including at minimum \$67 million for the breastfeeding peer counseling program.

I also want to highlight the work of charitable organizations, like our food banks, in alleviating hunger across our country. But the truth of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, charities alone cannot solve hunger. It takes a strong federal commitment, as well.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program**, known as TEFAP, provides highly nutritious food that food banks pair with donated items to craft packages for their clients. Although TEFAP commodities funding is mandatory, **TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds** are discretionary. I urge the Committee to continue to provide robust funding for the Storage and Distribution account.

I also urge this Committee to increase funding for **Nutrition Programs Administration**. Staff morale at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) has shown need for improvement in recent years. Staff at FNS are largely focused on SNAP integrity—but at the same time, other programs, including child nutrition and regional operations, often suffer. I urge this Committee to continue to provide robust funding for **Nutrition Programs Administration**, so that they can expand adequate coverage to all of their programs.

Mr. Chairman, next, I would like to say a few words about our international food aid programs.

First, as you know, I led the effort to create the **George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program**. Congress established the program in the 2002 Farm Bill and since that time it has provided literally millions of the most vulnerable children in the world with a nutritious meal in a school setting for over a decade. Each year, USDA receives more proposals than it can fund, highlighting the need to expand the program, rather than reduce or eliminating funding.

I have visited McGovern-Dole programs in Latin America and Africa, and I can testify that these programs advance the health and productivity of children, improve their school performance, increase attendance rates, especially among girls, and solidify community support for education, health and nutrition.

I am very grateful to this Committee for maintaining level funding or providing modest increases each fiscal year, often under very tight budget constraints. For FY 2020, I and many of our colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, are asking for \$235 million for McGovern-Dole, an increase of \$25 million.

Second, **PL 480 Title II – Food for Peace** – is our most important humanitarian food aid program, as well as supporting projects that address chronic food insecurity. As the world faces its greatest refugee crisis since World War II and increasing numbers of natural disasters, we cannot cut funding for this program. It is simply unfathomable to think otherwise. This program supports American farmers, whose commodities literally save tens of millions of lives each year. The program is now even more effective in getting food to those in need rapidly and effectively, combining Meals-Ready-to-Eat, vouchers, cash grants, local purchase, and U.S. commodities. For the past couple of years, Food for Peace has received about \$1.7 billion each year. For FY

2020, it needs to receive at least that level of funding, and I would recommend a more substantial increase to \$1.9 billion given the many existing crises requiring urgent attention and the knowledge that more are surely to come over the next 12 months.

McGovern-Dole and Food for Peace advance U.S. national interests and reflect the very best of American values. I urge continued, robust funding – and marked increases, if possible – for each.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak briefly about an issue unrelated to food and nutrition policy. Since 2008, my hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts has been dealing with the largest Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation in North America. More than 35,000 trees have been cut down and eradication and replanting efforts continue. I urge this Subcommittee to provide at least \$54 million for **Tree and Wood Pests** under **USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**, including at least \$42 million for efforts to eradicate the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) with no state or local cost share requirement.

Mr. Chairman, as you craft your FY20 appropriations legislation, I ask that you consider the millions of Americans and people across the world who rely on federal anti-hunger programs to feed their families, and I ask that you provide robust funding for these programs and reject

harmful riders that seek to undermine these programs. At a minimum, I ask that this Committee do nothing to make hunger worse.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

*Background on funding requests:*

**SNAP reserve account -- \$3 billion**

- \$3 billion is the recognized necessary minimum contingency funding.
- The reserve should cover at least one month of funding for all participants.

**WIC -- \$6.1 billion; \$67 million for breastfeeding**

- We must include enough funding to ensure no eligible applicants are turned away, maintain current and anticipated participation levels, and provide funds for nutrition services to maintain clinic staffing.
  - o Although WIC funding is discretionary, since the late 1990s, we have provided enough funding to serve all eligible participants. We should continue this tradition.

**McGovern-Dole – at least level funding**

- McGovern-Dole received about \$210 million in FY19. This year, I am asking for a modest increase of \$25 million, but at a minimum, the existing funding should be maintained in FY20.
- Each year, USDA receives more proposals than it can fund, highlighting the need to expand the program. This Committee should provide an increase in McGovern-Dole funding, if possible.

**PL 480 Title II – Food for Peace**

- We can't pretend that these crises are going to disappear. Need across the world is increasing, and we will need to come up with the money somehow. The strongest possible funding level should be included up front, in this bill.