



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

May 2024

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry Nutrition, and Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry Nutrition, and Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

As your committees take up the important work of reauthorizing the next Farm Bill this summer, we are writing to you as Bishops of six Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Synods, serving constituents in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. In our jurisdiction, over 560 congregations and tens of thousands of members are represented. Many of them are farmers, ranchers, food bank and food pantry volunteers, feeding program organizers, nutrition program recipients, climate justice advocates, concerned consumers, and more, who are affected by the Farm Bill.

Martin Luther, whose teachings are carried forward in the ELCA, understood daily bread as not only what nourishes our bodies, but also all of the people, processes, and natural resources that are required to meet our basic human needs each day. With other Christians in the United States and around the world, we pray for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer, and we also ask you to support policy that helps meet the need for all to be fed and nourished in a sustainable manner.

Members of the ELCA, both lay and clergy, emphasize our deep care and concern for neighbors at home and abroad—especially the most vulnerable—and for faithful stewardship of God's good creation. It is thus our faith-driven mission to advocate for holistic justice in the food system. Our congregations and members continue to respond to need on the ground, but we simply cannot do it alone. We seek a Farm Bill reauthorization that helps our ministries and members addressing the rising need we are seeing in our communities. We are relieved to see the assurance to protect some of the programs we advocate for in your committees' recent proposal. However, we are especially concerned with the funding cuts to critical programs such as SNAP and other hunger safety net programs. As you work on finalizing the next Farm Bill in the coming months, we would like to ensure that the next Farm Bill include the following critical needs:

**First, we ask for a Farm Bill that provides food for hungry neighbors at home and abroad.**

- Reject any additional conditions or cuts to SNAP that would have harmful effects on recipients, such as additional burdensome work reporting requirements.
- Safeguard the Thrifty Food Plan future benefit adjustment by considering factors other than inflation such as nutrition science and dietary guidelines to properly fund hunger safety net.
- Strengthen food assistance programs for U.S. citizens in U.S. territories; transition Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) to SNAP by cosponsoring the Puerto Rico Nutrition Fairness Act, H.R. 253/S.949.
- Eliminate restrictions on SNAP aid for formerly incarcerated people, lawfully present immigrants, and those who cannot meet work hours requirements for reasons such as caretaking.
- Fully fund priority international accounts including the Food for Peace Program (Title II), the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program, the Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Program, Farmer-to-Farmer, and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).
- Prioritize international initiatives that support local and regional procurement of food.
- Increase flexibility and efficiency in administration of international food aid programs.

**Second, we ask for a Farm Bill that supports healthy rural and farming communities.**

- Assist farmers who lose their livelihoods due to climate-related causes such as extreme heat, hurricanes, and flooding; and expand crop insurance to support farmers who may be affected by the negative impacts of climate change.
- Encourage labor and workplace safety within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) contracting, support a farmworker and food chain worker post within the USDA to improve interagency coordination, and expand access to emergency disaster grants to organizations assisting low-income migrants and seasonal farmworkers.
- Support more research on the impact of heat-stress, housing quality, and pesticide use on the health of farmworkers and address mental health among such workers.

**Third, we ask for a Farm Bill that includes and values people of all backgrounds.**

- Ensure that farm bill programs and policies do not disadvantage smaller-scale producers relative to the largest market actors.
- Invest in SNAP access on Tribal lands and support the ability of Tribal nations and individual Native food producers to advance their food sovereignty, production, and security initiatives.
- Respect the rights of and ensure equal opportunities for Black, Latino, and women farmers.
- Increase incentives for small-scale, sustainable, and/or regenerative farming.
- Improve access to farmland, credit, markets, and technical assistance for young, beginning and minority farmers.

**Fourth, we look for a Farm Bill that protects and restores creation to feed future generations.**

- Increase funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).
- Expand incentives for farmers to adopt climate mitigation and adaptation practices.
- Protect the \$20 billion in funding that was allocated for climate-friendly agriculture and farm bill conservation programs through the Inflation Reduction Act.

- Incentivize farmers to increase and preserve the biodiversity on their land through practices such as sustainable agroforestry, and subsidize farmers interested in installing practices such as regenerative agriculture at existing farms.
- Reduce food waste by promoting food recovery and donation at the farm level.

In closing, we applaud your leadership in the upcoming Farm Bill legislation and thank you for reviewing these priorities for inclusion in the Farm Bill. We hope to support a bipartisan bill, which has been a hallmark of this historic legislation, as your committees work toward a successful Farm Bill reauthorization. Our ELCA community respects our elected leaders and holds you regularly in prayer.

Yours respectfully,



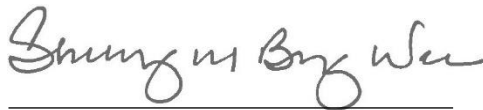

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Bishop Meggan Manlove  
Northwest Intermountain Synod




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Bishop Richard E. Jaech  
Southwestern Washington Synod



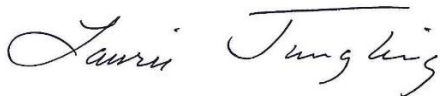

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Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee  
Northwest Washington Synod




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Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar  
Oregon Synod




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Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling  
Bishop, Montana Synod




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Bishop Shelley Wickstrom  
Alaska Synod

CC: Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington, Representative Andrea Salinas of Oregon, and Representative Lori Chavez-Deremer of Oregon.

**About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with over 3 million members in more than 8,700 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands," the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.