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October 1, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We are writing regarding the September 20, 2025, announcement of the termination of future Economic Research Service (ERS) Household Food Security Reports as well as actions that have been taken against ERS employees.¹ For the past three decades, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department) has consistently published Household Food Security Reports using data collected in an annual food security survey, the Food Security Supplemental, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. These reports provide critical information and data on the prevalence and severity of food insecurity among U.S. households, which are instrumental in assessing food insecurity trends, especially among vulnerable populations.

Federal nutrition programs within the Committee on Education and Workforce's jurisdiction—such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)—were created to improve health outcomes and reduce food insecurity for children and low-income people. Annual information is a crucial component of any federal policy and ensures that decisions made at the federal level are evidence-based and address the economic challenges faced by families across the country. In the September 20, 2025 termination press release, you stated that the “prevalence of food insecurity [has] remained virtually unchanged”;² however, the most recent report entitled “Household Food Security in the United States in 2023” (the 2023 Report) undeniably shows that hunger has been on the rise in recent years and food insecurity increased between both 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.³ Additionally, these reports provide valuable

¹ Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Agriculture, USDA Terminates Redundant Food Insecurity Survey (Sept. 20, 2025), <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/09/20/usda-terminates-redundant-food-insecurity-survey>.

² *Id.*

³ See, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Household Food Security in the United States in 2023, U.S. Dep't of Agriculture Econ. Rsch. Serv. (Sept. 2024), <https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/109896/ERR-337.pdf?v=40202>; Matthew P. Rabbitt, Household Food Security in the United States in 2022, U.S. Dep't of

disaggregated data on food insecurity trends and help identify vulnerable populations. The 2023 Report found that rates of food insecurity for Black households (23.3 percent) and Latinx households (21.9 percent) were more than double the rates for White non-Latinx households (9.9 percent).⁴

The Department has released the Household Food Security Reports for decades across both Democratic and Republican administrations, and they have often been considered the gold standard for measuring food insecurity among households.⁵ While the reports have been criticized as “redundant, costly, politicized, and extraneous”,⁶ the Department has yet to name any publicly available data sets it will rely on to provide the same or similar timely and accurate information or explain how the reports are redundant. It is crucial that any alternate data sources provide the same level of granularity as the Household Food Security Reports in terms of severity of hunger and prevalence among different populations. Notably, the Department’s Fiscal Year 2026 Economic Research Service (ERS) budget justification did not include any reference to a high or increasing cost of producing the Household Food Security Reports or conducting the annual Food Security Supplemental.⁷

It has not gone unnoticed that the Department has decided to terminate the dissemination of household food security data just as congressional Republicans have enacted sweeping and historic cuts to proven public health interventions that can keep families from going hungry. The cuts made to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—an anti-hunger program that serves one in eight people across the country and has been shown to reduce poverty and food insecurity⁸—are expected to eliminate or substantially reduce SNAP benefits for 4 million low-income people.⁹ Additionally, the cuts to SNAP and Medicaid will further exacerbate food insecurity since any eligibility changes that limit participation in either program negatively impact children’s ability to seamlessly participate in free school meals, summer food benefits, and critical nutrition and health care services.¹⁰ The decision to limit the availability of annual food security data while households across the country face rising food prices is unwise and

Agriculture Econ. Rsch. Serv. (Oct. 2023), https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/107703/ERR-325_Summary.pdf?v=82499.

⁴ *Id* at 20.

⁵ Press Release, Food Rsch. & Action Ctr., USDA’s Decision to End 30-Year Food Security Report Will Hide the Struggle of Millions of Families to Put Food on the Table (Sept. 22, 2025), <https://frac.org/news/foodsecuritysurveyterminationsept25>.

⁶ *Supra* note 1.

⁷ 2026 USDA Explanatory Notes – Economic Research center, U.S. Dep’t of Agriculture <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/18-2026-CJ-ERS.pdf> (last visited Sept. 26, 2025).

⁸ *A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets*, Ctr. On Budget and Pol’y Priorities (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Alabama>.

⁹ *By the Numbers: Harmful Republican Megabill Takes Food Assistance Away from Millions of People*, Ctr. On Budget and Pol’y Priorities (June 30, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/by-the-numbers-harmful-republican-megabill-takes-food-assistance-away-from>.

¹⁰ Clarissa Hayes, Budget Reconciliation Update: Cuts to SNAP are Cuts to School Meals, Food Rsch. & Action Ctr. (May 4, 2025), <https://frac.org/blog/budget-reconciliation-update-cuts-to-snap-are-cuts-to-school-meals>.

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shortsighted.¹¹ Without this data, it is unclear how the Department plans to assess the effectiveness of federal nutrition programs and best allocate federal resources to the most vulnerable. **We simply cannot address problems that we cannot measure.**

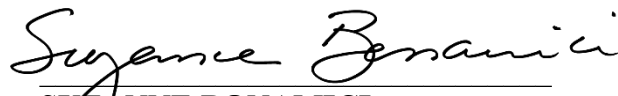
Additionally, we are concerned about the decision to place up to a dozen ERS employees, including Acting Administrator Kelly B. Maguire, on administrative leave.¹² In order to ensure that the agency can continue its important work on peer-reviewed economic research without delay, it is imperative that these dedicated employees be reinstated immediately. This is especially troubling as ERS is already operating without a third of its staff, some of whom accepted the buyout offer earlier this year.¹³

We are extremely alarmed by the termination of the Household Food Security Reports. This termination creates unnecessary uncertainty and casts doubt on a trusted and consistent measure of food insecurity that has guided policymakers over the past 30 years. We urge you to immediately restore the reporting of data in the Household Food Security Reports and reinstate ERS employees. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education

cc: The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, Committee on Education and Workforce
The Honorable Kevin Kiley, Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary,
and Secondary Education

¹¹ *Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): U. S. city average, by detailed expenditure category*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.t02.htm> (last visited Sept. 25, 2025).

¹² Tami Luhby, *Trump Administration put Hunger Researchers on Leave After Cancelling Food Insecurity Report*, CNN (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/23/politics/usda-hunger-researchers-on-leave>; Management Directory, U.S. Dep't of Agriculture Econ. Rsch. Serv., <https://www.ers.usda.gov/contact-us/management-directory> (last visited Sept. 26, 2025).

¹³ Steve Davies, *ERS Administrator; Others on Leave over Hunger Survey Cancellation* (Sept. 23, 2025), <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/23499-ers-administrator-others-on-leave-over-hunger-survey-cancellation>.