Title: Hunger Action Month and the Urgency of Passing the Farm Bill

By Michael Halligan, CEO of God’s Pantry Food Bank

In Central and Eastern Kentucky, 1 in 6 people are unsure where they will get their next meal. At God’s Pantry, our mission is to reduce hunger by working together to feed Kentucky communities. With the assistance of many government initiatives, 100s of partners, and 1000s of donors, we serve our communities by providing nearly 100,000 meals every single day. This would not be possible without a comprehensive farm bill.

As we observe Hunger Action Month, we must recognize the vital role that the farm bill plays in tackling food insecurity in our communities. The farm bill is not just another piece of legislation; it is the cornerstone of our efforts to provide access to nutritious food for Kentuckians facing hunger.

The 2023 Farm Bill presents a unique opportunity for us to make a real difference in the lives of our neighbors who are struggling with hunger. This comprehensive legislation governs numerous nutrition and agriculture programs and serves as a catalyst for collaboration between food banks and government initiatives to support families and individuals in need.

I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of the farm bill on our operations. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) work in conjunction with God’s Pantry and our hunger-relief network to provide essential aid to those experiencing hunger. God’s Pantry’s CSFP is the second-largest food bank-supported program in the nation, second only to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

God’s Pantry, along with Feeding America, is urging Congress to strengthen these critical nutrition programs through the 2023 Farm Bill. This includes increased funding for TEFAP to aid people facing hunger and support the U.S. agricultural economy. Strengthen the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program by allocating more resources to support local growers and producers. Protect the purchasing power of SNAP by ensuring that benefits align with grocery prices and providing adequate support during challenging economic times. Provide better support for individuals seeking employment by adequately funding and improving state employment and training programs and reauthorize and
streamline CSFP by reducing administrative burdens for program participants and increasing overall efficiency by streamlining reporting requirements.

We must ensure that everyone in Kentucky and the United States, regardless of their race, background, or ZIP code, can access the food and resources required to thrive.

It is imperative for lawmakers to come together across party lines and pass a bipartisan 2023 Farm Bill that prioritizes food bank support and the health of the people we serve. The farm bill is not merely a political matter; it is a moral imperative for our society.

This Hunger Action Month, let us reaffirm our vision of a nourished life for every Kentuckian. We call upon our lawmakers to prioritize the passage of the 2023 Farm Bill, incorporating the recommendations outlined above. Together, we can reduce hunger and build stronger, more resilient communities.

To learn more about God’s Pantry Food Bank, please visit godspantry.org.