



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

## **Testimony before the National Commission on Hunger**

**Rev. David Beckmann,  
President, Bread for the World**

**July 14, 2015**

Thank you for your service on this Commission. I'm David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. We are a broadly interdenominational Christian advocacy movement against hunger. I'm also president of the Alliance to End Hunger, which engages diverse organizations in building the political will to end hunger.

Bread for the World works on world hunger as well as hunger in this country, and we are struck that the world as a whole is making dramatic progress against hunger, poverty, and disease. The number of people in extreme poverty has dropped from 2 billion people in 1990 to 1 billion people today. All kinds of countries – from Bangladesh and Ethiopia, to Brazil and the United Kingdom – have made progress against hunger and poverty. So it is clearly possible for us to reduce – perhaps virtually end – hunger in our richly blessed nation.

Churches and charities can't make substantial progress against hunger on our own. We have crucial roles to play. But the federal nutrition programs provide 20 times as much food assistance as do all the churches and food banks in the country. So if Congress cuts the federal nutrition programs by just 5 percent, that cancels out all the food assistance that churches and charities provide.

Some people think we need to cut SNAP and EITC to reduce the fiscal deficit. But the U.S. deficit is a long-term problem, and reducing hunger and poverty will contribute to deficit reduction over the long-term. The stresses of hunger and poverty make people sick. Poverty diets of cheap food – intermittent food – often make people obese. Many people who have been battered by hunger often end up with diabetes or heart disease, sometimes supported for decades by SSI, Medicaid, and Medicare. Most tragically, poor nutrition robs little children of their God-given potential. Their brains are damaged, with long-term costs for all of us.

To end hunger, we need to maintain and improve the federal nutrition programs. This Commission should make three specific recommendations to Congress in this area:

- First, pass a new child nutrition bill that strengthens the summer feeding and school breakfast programs. This is urgent.
- Second, don't cut SNAP.

- Third, revive the Hunger-Free Communities program. Community coalitions coordinate efforts, and they work from below to make the federal programs more effective. When Congress provided just \$5 million for Hunger-Free Community coalitions in 2010, we saw a dramatic flowering of community anti-hunger coalitions across the country.

The Commission should be clear that broader measures to reduce poverty are also important to ending hunger: fiscal and monetary policies that contribute to full employment; stronger tax credits for the working poor; immigration reform; and measures to reduce mass incarceration. There is bipartisan interest in all these issues, and action on these issues would reduce hunger.

The most recent Gallup poll on hunger suggests that economic recovery and the reduction of unemployment may have brought hunger back down to the level of 2008. So right now is a great time for the Commission to launch a push to end hunger in America.

Based on global progress against hunger and poverty, the nations of the world will agree this September on international development goals. They will resolve to end world hunger by 2030. This Commission should propose that the United States also aim to end hunger by 2030.