**Anti-Hunger Talking Points for the Holidays (updated Nov. 20, 2024)**   
 ***Hunger & The Holidays*** (Red text = holiday-themed language)

* The holidays often bring people together around shared meals, but the experience can look very different for neighbors facing hunger. Many hardworking people turn to food banks for extra support putting food on the table during this time of the year.
* Food insecurity affects people in every county and congressional district in the U.S., and it doesn’t take a break during the holidays.
  + *1 in 9 people in Virginia, including 1 in 7 children, experienced food insecurity in 2022.*
  + *This is the highest rate and number nationally since 2014.*
* In Virginia’s 5th District, food insecurity jumped to 12.7 percent and 17.4 percent for children.
* In Virginia’s 6th District, food insecurity jumped to 13.2 percent and 15.5% for children.
* In 2021, nearly a quarter (24%) of active-duty service members experienced food insecurity, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.
* **Food insecurity in single-parent households remained high in 2023**. Food insecurity among members of households with children led by a single female rose to almost 36% in **2023, or 1 in 3 individuals**. Food insecurity among members of households with children led by a single male rose to 23%, or 1 in 4 individuals.

***Food Banks & The Farm Bill***

* The farm bill is federal legislation that governs food and farming policies. A strong farm bill supports our farmers and food banks year-round; it can help the federal government strengthen our farming economies, address issues with our food supply chain, and ensure our food banks can serve communities across the country. Let’s put our neighbors and farmers first this holiday season and ask Congress to pass a strong, bipartisan farm bill.
* The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) moves food from U.S. farmers and producers to local food banks to families facing hunger. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides short-term support to help people put food on the table during tough times. Together, these programs help fill meal gaps for families and strengthen our agricultural economy.
* A strong farm bill is crucial during the holidays when the need for hunger relief can be most acute, particularly in rural communities. Nine out of 10 counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are rural.
* As food banks and pantries continue to face heightened demand for assistance this holiday season, we need action on critical legislation like the farm bill that can help end hunger in our communities.
* As Congress returns for the lame-duck session, we urge lawmakers to prioritize passing a strong farm bill that invests in federal nutrition programs like TEFAP and SNAP, which help grow local economies while helping neighbors facing hunger access food.
* In the next farm bill, [ORGANIZATION NAME] calls on Congress to:
  + Reauthorize and double annual mandatory funding for TEFAP food purchases, adjusted for inflation.
  + Reauthorize and increase annual discretionary funding to $200 million for TEFAP storage and distribution.
  + Reauthorize $15 million in annual discretionary funding for TEFAP infrastructure grants.
  + Ensure SNAP’s purchasing power aligns with rising grocery prices.
  + Protect SNAP participants’ ability to choose the best foods for their families.
  + Simplify SNAP eligibility and enrollment for older adults, college students, veterans, working families, immigrants, and other people facing barriers.

***Food Banks Impacted by Hurricanes***

* When Congress reconvenes in November, lawmakers will likely take up disaster supplemental funding legislation to provide disaster relief to support communities impacted by the recent hurricanes.
* We are asking Congress to provide funding to ensure communities impacted by natural disasters have the resources to recover. Food banks and pantries have been responding to provide food assistance in communities devastated by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. It will take years and a significant federal investment to recover. To provide assurance of additional nutritious food during the lengthy recovery, Congress must provide $245 million in additional TEFAP funds to help impacted communities.
* We also ask Congress to ensure seniors and tribes do not miss meals due to supply chain disruptions in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Congress should provide emergency funding of $29.5 million for CSFP program operators to cover additional costs to purchase or distribute food due to the disruptions.

***Additional Messaging for Rural Audiences***

* TEFAP is a lifeline for rural communities where the rates of food insecurity are disproportionately high. Approximately 96% of rural communities received TEFAP foods distributed by a food bank.
* The holidays can be a time of hard decisions for millions of families. Food banks and pantries combine the nutritious food provided by USDA through TEFAP with donated and purchased food to maximize resources provided to families in need.
* For years, food banks, their partners, and the agriculture community have maintained a deep relationship to support our nation’s farmers, and families facing hunger. Food banks are grateful for the continued partnership between the USDA, farmers and agricultural partners, which has been vital to meeting the demand for hunger relief during the holiday season and year-round.