

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Subcommittee Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Subcommittee Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
2084 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Subcommittee Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Subcommittee Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Merkley, Ranking Member Murkowski, Chair Simpson, and Ranking Member Pingree:

Up to forty percent of all the food we produce or import in the United States goes uneaten, costing Americans \$473 billion every year.¹ Farmers, food businesses, and households are spending money to grow, process, purchase, and ultimately dispose of perfectly safe, wholesome food. Most of this surplus food (\$317 billion worth) is incinerated, sent down the drain, or thrown in landfills.² Meanwhile, over 12% of American households still lack consistent access to enough nutritious food.³

Recognizing the imperative to feed more people while reducing the food system's environmental impact, the United States committed to reducing food loss and waste by 50% by 2030.⁴ The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have been working in collaboration to address food loss and waste since 2018,⁵ and recently released a Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and

¹ *Food Waste*, REFED, <https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem/> (last visited April 2, 2024).

² *ReFED Insights Engine by Destination*, REFED https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=destination&indicator=us-dollars-surplus&view=detail&year=2022 (last visited April 2, 2024).

³ Matthew Rabbitt et al., *Household Food Security in the United States in 2022*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRIC. ECON. RSCH. SERV. i (Oct. 2023), <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/107703/err-325.pdf?v=7804.9>.

⁴ *United States 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal*, U.S. ENV'T PROT. AGENCY (Feb, 21, 2024), <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/united-states-2030-food-loss-and-waste-reduction-goal#goal>; *U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions*, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., <https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/champions> (last visited April 2, 2024).

⁵ U.S. ENV'T PROT. AGENCY, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMIN., FORMAL AGREEMENT RELATIVE TO COOPERATION AND COORDINATION ON FOOD LOSS AND WASTE (Oct. 2018), <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-fda-epa-formal-agreement.pdf>.

Recycling Organics.⁶ Agency actions in the Draft Strategy include educating consumers about food loss and waste, measuring the quantity and impact of food loss and waste in the United States, and leveraging existing grant funding to support food recovery, composting, and anaerobic digestion infrastructure.

Approximately half of all food waste in the United States happens in our own homes,⁷ and therefore addressing household food waste would go a long way in reducing the environmental impact of our food system. As you develop the FY 2025 interior appropriations bill, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that you **direct \$2 million in existing resources provided for the Categorical Grants: Resource Recovery and Hazardous Waste to supplement education through the EPA’s Recycling Education Outreach program⁸ to a Food Waste Reduction National Education Campaign administered by EPA and in partnership with USDA. We also respectfully request report language directing EPA to carry out a food waste reduction national campaign strategy.**

The EPA identified in the Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics that they will implement a national consumer education campaign on food loss and waste.⁹ The EPA should partner with the USDA to lead a consumer education campaign. ReFED estimates that a large-scale advocacy campaign with public, private, and philanthropic investment would have a net financial benefit of \$17.2 billion, creating 1,200 jobs and reducing 18.9 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent.¹⁰ The greatest benefactors of this education are consumers, meaning household food dollars will go further and consumers will eat more of the food they purchase. To effectively educate consumers through a national campaign, the EPA needs sufficient funding dedicated to this effort.

Thank you for your support in addressing food loss and waste in the United States. We urge you to continue investing in a more efficient food system.

Sincerely,

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⁶ U.S. ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, U.S. DEP’T OF AGRIC., U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMIN., DRAFT NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE AND RECYCLING ORGANICS (Dec. 2023), <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/food-waste-strategy.pdf>.

⁷ *Food Waste*, ReFED, <https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem/> (last visited April 2, 2024).

⁸ See U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROT. AGENCY, FY2025 EPA BUDGET IN BRIEF, EPA-190-R-24-001 104 (Mar. 2024); U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROT. AGENCY, FISCAL YEAR 2025 JUSTIFICATION OF APPROPRIATION ESTIMATES FOR THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, EPA-190-R-24-001 895 (Mar. 2024).

⁹ U.S. ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, U.S. DEP’T OF AGRIC., U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMIN., DRAFT NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE AND RECYCLING ORGANICS 11 (Dec. 2023), <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/food-waste-strategy.pdf>.

¹⁰ *ReFED Insights Engine Solutions Database – Consumer Education Campaigns*, ReFED, <https://insights-engine.refed.org/solution-database/consumer-education-campaigns> (last visited April 2, 2024).

Boulder Food Rescue
Bread for the World
Change Today, Change Tomorrow
City and County of Denver
Compassionate St Augustine
Creation Justice Ministries
Dana Siles Photographer
Delaware State University
Earthjustice
EastWest Food Rescue
Epic Cure Inc.
Farmlink Project
Feeding Charlotte
Flashfood
Food Cycle Science
Food Link
Food Recovery Network
FoodRecovery.org
Global Cooking School, LLC
Good Trouble St. Johns!
Gotham Food Pantry
Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Island Harvest Food Bank
La Soupe
Lisa K. Johnson Consulting
Littlefoot Ventures
Mill Industries Inc.
Move For Hunger
My Mindful Kitchen
The Nashville Food Project
Natural Resources Defense Council
Northern California Recycling Association
Paschal Farms International
ReFED
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Inc.
Saving Grace Perishable Food Rescue
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County (CA)
Share My Meals Inc

Solid Waste Environmental Excellence Performance (SWEEP)
Spoonfuls
StopWaste
The Southwest Collective
Too Good To Go
TotalCtrl
University of Arkansas
Upcycled Food Association
US Composting Council
Vivaria Ecologics
Waste Not
We Don't Waste
Winnow
Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture (WANDA)
World Wildlife Fund