

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 20, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to convey our great concern with mounting global food insecurity, particularly in Afghanistan where nearly half the population is at severe risk. We welcome your recent decisions to provide an additional \$308 million in aid and ease procedures for humanitarian groups to help meet these desperate conditions, and hope other international donors will take similar actions. However, given that both the United Nations and World Food Programme (WFP) indicate far more is needed to prevent mass starvation in multiple countries, we strongly urge you to include funding for emergency international food aid in any upcoming supplemental request to Congress.

Despite progress in recent decades to prevent and alleviate global hunger, 2020 and 2021 have seen the highest levels of hunger in more than ten years with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating conflict areas and severe droughts. According to the United Nations' 2021 report, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, close to 12 percent of the world's population, representing 928 million people, faces severe food insecurity and 30 percent face at least moderate food insecurity.¹ The impact is particularly significant on women and children, with more than 149 million children under the age of five affected by stunting and nearly 30 percent of women around the world between the ages of 15 and 49 affected by anemia.² Such severe and rising levels of food insecurity impact nearly every region of the world. In fact, the WFP warned in November that 45 million people are on the brink of famine across 43 countries, a devastating figure that is nearly 67 percent higher than the estimated 27 million in a similar dire situation in 2019.³

Nowhere are the humanitarian needs more acute than in Afghanistan, where freezing winter weather is only worsening acute hunger. According to the WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization, while Afghanistan has suffered from malnutrition for decades, recent factors put an estimated 23 million people, around 55 percent of Afghanistan's population, at potentially life-threatening levels of food insecurity.⁴ In addition, the United Nations

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.* Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4474en>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Khorsandi, Peyvand and Paul Anthem. "45 million people at risk of famine require urgent intervention." The World Food Programme. Published November 8, 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/45-million-people-are-famines-door>.

⁴ "Half of Afghanistan's population face acute hunger as humanitarian needs grow to record levels." The World Food Programme. Published October 25, 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/news/half-afghanistans-population-face-acute-hunger-humanitarian-needs-grow-record-levels>.

Development Programme warned that as much as 97 percent of Afghanistan's population is at risk of sinking below the poverty line by this summer.⁵

As such, we urge you to include robust funding for emergency international food aid as part of any upcoming supplemental request to Congress. These additional funds, through the International Disaster Assistance account, Food for Peace Title II, or others as appropriate, would go a long way toward preventing starvation around the world.

We stand ready to help with such a request and appreciate your attention to this timely issue.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

⁵ "97 percent of Afghans could plunge into poverty by mid 2022, says UNDP." United Nations Development Programme. Published September 9, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/97-percent-afghans-could-plunge-poverty-mid-2022-says-undp>.

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
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Bernie Sanders

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Ben Cardin

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Mark R. Warner

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