Dear Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Power,

We write to urge you to leverage the resources available in the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT), an emergency international food aid program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Administration for International Development (USAID), to help address ongoing humanitarian food crises. The deteriorating state of global food security and the ongoing pressures on availability of commodity food assistance resources warrant the dispersion of those funds.

Over the past year we have seen the emergency food and nutrition needs of hungry citizens around the world intensify, resulting from events such as the COVID-19 Pandemic, conflicts, and natural disasters. The USDA estimates that around 1.2 billion people were food-insecure in 2021, a 32 percent increase from 2020, and recent trends indicate that the number is on the rise. In countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, we have seen a dire need for food assistance.

The immediate need for aid, particularly commodities, will likely increase in light of Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine is a large producer of wheat and grain, and if production levels drop it is likely that we will see corresponding pressure in the global grain markets. This may be compounded by further shocks to global grain, energy, and fertilizer supply, as Russia is rightfully sanctioned for its actions. Together, Russia and Ukraine supply 26 percent of global wheat exports and Ukraine supplies 13 percent of the world’s corn. Supply shortages or increased prices will disproportionately impact developing and middle-income countries that rely heavily on imports of food.

In light of these complex and disturbing circumstances, we request that you use the BEHT to bolster American assistance to hungry people around the world. The trust was created for use during times of exceptional need, and the acute hunger crises that too many people are experiencing justifies the use of these funds.

Sincerely,

David Scott
Chairman

Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson
Ranking Member
Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress

Julia Letlow
Member of Congress

Tracey Mann
Member of Congress

Barry Moore
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
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Tom O’Halleran
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress
David Rouzer  
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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier  
Member of Congress

Austin Scott  
Member of Congress

Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress