



September 5, 2007

Dear Senator Harkin,

I am writing to you today because I know you care about children's health as much as I do. That's why I am joining with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine in urging you to support Farm Bill legislation that would promote the production and consumption of fruits and vegetables and cut subsidies for unhealthy foods.

The Farm Bill provides billions of dollars in subsidies for unhealthy foods that contribute to childhood obesity and other diet-related illnesses. One-third of children will suffer "adult onset" diabetes, and teenagers are now being diagnosed with the early stages of heart disease. But all of this is preventable.

About 75 percent of food production subsidies are for feed crops or for the direct production of meat and dairy products. And by heavily subsidizing feed crop farmers, Congress is ultimately financing burgers, bacon, butter, and cheese—high-fat, cholesterol-laden foods that clog our school lunch lines.

To support agricultural interests, the United States Department of Agriculture buys the surplus of meat and dairy products that the Farm Bill helps to create. These high-fat foods are then funneled into the National School Lunch Program and other nutrition programs that Americans rely on. In fact, the federal government spent eight times more on beef, cheese, and butter than on fruits and vegetables in 2005.

Even though everyone agrees that children need to eat more fresh produce, less than 1 percent of Farm Bill subsidies go to fruits and vegetable farmers. But now Congress has a chance to change those figures. Programs like the federal Fruits and Vegetable Program have been successful in encouraging children to increase their produce consumption, and these programs desperately need more funding.

As you know, the Farm Bill doesn't just affect farmers. The Farm Bill truly is America's national "food bill," which is why it's so important that you support healthy changes. Our children are counting you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bill Maher'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bill Maher