

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We appreciate the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service's (USDA FNS) efforts to ensure children have access to nutritious food during the COVID-19 pandemic through the issuance of nationwide waivers and guidance to get Pandemic EBT swiftly implemented after the passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. As more families feel the economic impact of the crisis, we urge you to continue to issue nationwide waivers to respond to the growing need, including a nationwide area eligibility waiver, and to extend the child nutrition waivers past June 30, to ease the administrative burden on State child nutrition agencies as well as Food and Nutrition Services staff. Specifically, we ask that you:

- Continue to address the new challenges states are facing and issue nationwide waivers for all requests that USDA has already received that strengthen or expand child nutrition benefits. The initial set of nationwide waivers were incredibly helpful, but there is still more to be done to respond to the growing need. States, schools, and community stakeholders have been on the frontline responding to the crisis. They have the best understanding of the challenges and barriers being faced. The waivers that states have submitted are critical to easing administrative barriers and allowing meals to be served. These should be made available nationwide to allow an easier administrative process while allowing for continued oversight.
- Extend the area eligibility waiver nationwide. While a majority of states have received an area eligibility waiver over the past two weeks, they vary greatly. In every state, it is an administrative challenge for schools and sponsors to identify children who have been certified for free or reduced-price school meals, especially in rural areas. In addition, with each passing day, more children are becoming eligible for free school meals. With schools closed there are significant barriers for newly eligible families to be certified to receive free school meals.
- Extend the deadlines for all nationwide waivers past the current expiration date of June 30, 2020. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave USDA the authority to issue

nationwide waivers until September 30, 2020. We urge you extend the waivers to September 30 or until this public health emergency ends to give states, schools and community partners the flexibility they need to ensure low-income children have access to meals during this crisis.

We appreciate your consideration and encourage you to move quickly to ensure states have all the tools and security they need to respond to the current crisis.

Sincerely,

/s/
David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/
Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

/s/
Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

/s/
Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

/s/
Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

/s/
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

/s/
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

/s/
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

/s/
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/
Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

/s/
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

/s/
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/
John Katko
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Stewart
Member of Congress

/s/
Jason Crow
Member of Congress

/s/
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

/s/
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/
Ben McAdams
Member of Congress

/s/
Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress

/s/
Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/
William R. Keating
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

/s/
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/
Denny Heck
Member of Congress

/s/
Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress