

April 2, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to spread, our nation's largest and most effective anti-hunger safety net, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is more important than ever.

This public health crisis is shuttering businesses and leaving increasing numbers of Americans unemployed and unable to put food on the table. In response, the federal government must provide maximum flexibility for the growing number of SNAP participants. Specifically, SNAP participants should have the ability to purchase a variety of foods, including hot and prepared foods, at a variety of food establishments.

I ask USDA to expeditiously:

- Provide a temporary waiver so that SNAP beneficiaries can purchase hot prepared foods at all qualifying food establishments, large and small;
- Issue guidance on the existence of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) to states and our nation's restaurants, including a template of an approved memo of understanding (MOUs) for states to participate in RMP;
- Clarify how restaurants that have point of sale devices that currently accept Temporary Assistance for Needy People cash as a form of payment through electronic benefits transfer (EBT) can also accept SNAP EBT, and issue guidance to instruct states and their EBT processors how to do so during this crisis;
- Provide expedited authorization of any new outlets, including restaurants, looking to participate through either the RMP or hot meal waivers;
- Allow national restaurant franchises that have MOUs in any state or county to easily participate in another state or county if that state chooses to operate RMP;
- Temporarily allow all populations to utilize the RMP even if they are not currently in the eligible categories of people who are elderly, disabled, and homeless; and
- Take whatever actions are necessary to facilitate the participation in RMP for all SNAP recipients until end of the COVID-19 emergency.

Thank you for your serious considerations and attention to this very urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Senator Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

CC:
Brandon Lipps
Deputy Undersecretary
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

Pam Miller
Administrator
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services