

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate Room  
S-221, The U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate Room  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell,

We urge you to take steps now to prevent a “hunger cliff” that otherwise looms ahead when the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Declaration (PHE) expires.

Food insecurity in 2020 affected an estimated 1 in 10 U.S. households overall. Food insecurity also had disparate impacts, with food insecurity affecting nearly one in eight Hispanic-headed households and more than one in five Black-headed households.<sup>1</sup> Recent supply chain issues, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and other factors pushing food price rises are exacerbating the challenges many Americans have in affording an adequate diet.

Federal relief enacted at the outset of the pandemic has helped to mitigate the depth of hunger. Specifically, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 authorized the issuance of SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs) while federal and state PHEs are in place. That Act also temporarily suspended time limits on SNAP eligibility for certain unemployed and underemployed workers and provided USDA with enhanced authority to allow changes to SNAP operations. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 increased SNAP access for college students during COVID-19.

In addition to positive impacts on the food budgets of millions of households and the streamlining of administrative operations, the temporary SNAP relief has had positive impacts on the economy. Each \$1 in SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity. That has benefited the entire food chain—from farmers, ranchers and food manufacturers, to truckers, grocers and store clerks.

Moreover, SNAP has had positive impacts on all communities, rural as well as urban. In 2020, SNAP reduced poverty in metro areas by 0.8 percent and in rural areas by nearly double that (1.4 percent).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=102075>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SNAP-Supports-Rural-Families.pdf?x91208>

Once the HHS PHE sunsets, however, much of these SNAP relief measures also will end. Due to the end to EAs alone, most SNAP participants, on average, are expected to lose \$82 per person a month in SNAP benefits. The average SNAP benefit will fall to about a mere \$5.40 per person per day.

Action is needed to avert the looming “hunger cliff” and to strengthen SNAP permanently. First, Congress should both extend the authority for issuing SNAP EAs beyond the PHE to provide a more gradual path to regular benefits as well as instruct USDA to require states to notify and robustly screen all households for all allowable shelter, childcare, and medical expense deductions in order to ensure the correct amount of SNAP benefits.

Second, Congress should include in any upcoming legislation three key strengthen SNAP bills:

Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021 (H.R. 4077 / S. 2192) to address SNAP benefit adequacy and equity by: 1) substituting the Low Cost Food Plan for the Thrifty Food Plan as the market basket on which to calculate SNAP benefits; 2) increasing the \$20 minimum monthly benefit; 3) removing the cap on the shelter costs that households with children can take into account for SNAP; 4) streamlining the SNAP standard medical deduction for SNAP participants who are elderly or have a disability; and 5) providing equitable access to residents of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Two additional bills to improve equitable access to SNAP: one, ending a time limit on benefits for certain unemployed and underemployed adults (Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2021 (H.R. 1753)); the other, eliminating long-standing rules that require many college students to work 20 hours a week for their food benefits, effectively undermining their educational success. (Enhance Access To SNAP Act of 2021 (H.R. 1919 / S. 2515)).

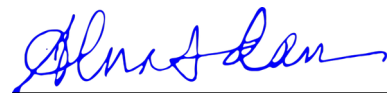
Hungry people can’t wait. Taking these actions now can help avert a severe “hunger cliff” and promote food security and economic equity during COVID-19 and beyond.

Sincerely,



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress



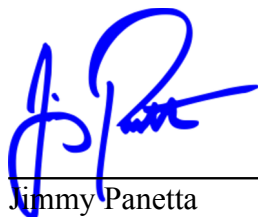
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



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Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



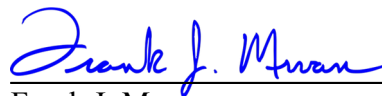
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



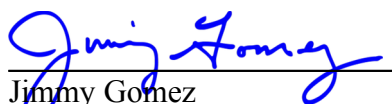
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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

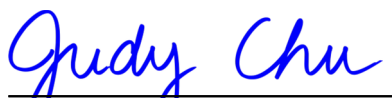


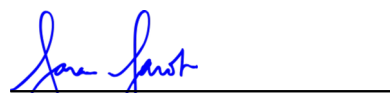
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Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress


  
Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress


  
Al Lawson  
Member of Congress


  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

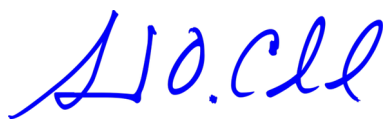
  
Sara Jacobs  
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Terri A. Sewell  
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
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Mark Pocan  
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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

  
Zoe Lofgren  
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Suzan K. DelBene  
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Peter Welch  
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Mark DeSaulnier  
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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



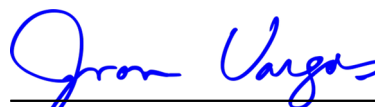
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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



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J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



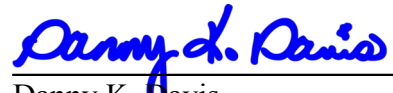
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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



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Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

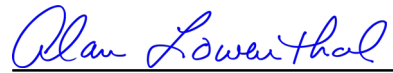


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Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



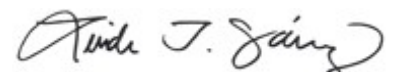
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Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



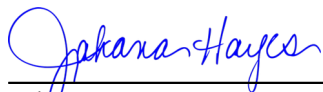
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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



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Gregorio Kilili Camacho  
Sablan  
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



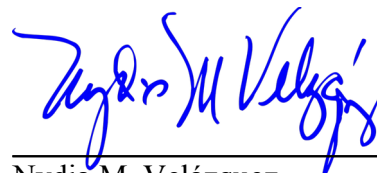
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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



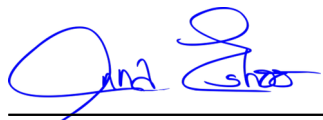
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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



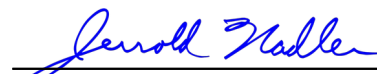
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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



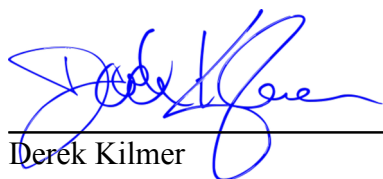
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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



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Derek Kilmer  
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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



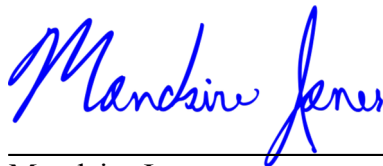
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress



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Mondaire Jones  
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Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress





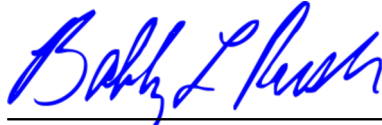
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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



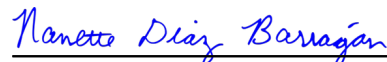
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Mike Levin  
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Bobby L. Rush  
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Nanette Diaz Barragan  
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G.K. Butterfield  
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Shontel M. Brown  
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Veronica Escobar  
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Ruben Gallego  
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Vicente Gonzalez  
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Nikema Williams  
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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



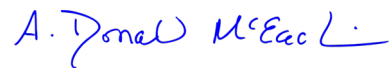
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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



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A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress



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Troy Carter  
Member of Congress