

July 22, 2020

Dear Senators Roberts and Moran,

Thank you for your partnership and support of important provisions in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act that provided much needed assistance to the state of Kansas, Kansas residents, and Kansas businesses impacted by COVID-19. While the provisions have helped, it is likely that more economic stabilization will be necessary.

That is why I am reaching out to you today regarding the next COVID relief bill under consideration in the Senate. We appreciate the support that the previous COVID bills have provided for the state and for Kansans who are struggling in these unprecedented times.

There are many needs to be addressed in the next bill, but one that I want to highlight is the need to increase the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefit. (SNAP is known as Food Assistance in Kansas.)

Kansas is fortunate to benefit from the leadership of its Senators in protecting and funding federal nutrition programs through the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee. Your leadership, particularly that of Senator Roberts in shepherding through the 2018 Farm Bill with a historic bipartisan vote, has provided stable support for the SNAP program through many farm bills in both the House and the Senate. Your combined leadership has ensured that this counter-cyclical program is able to respond to our current economic crisis in exactly the way it was designed to.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented situation that has required swift action from the federal government in the form of additional funding for food purchases for food banks, the launch of Pandemic EBT benefits to provide school meals when school is closed, and temporary SNAP Emergency Allotments to help the 60% of SNAP participants who are not already at the maximum monthly benefit.

While the support of the federal government through short-term programs like these as well as the Farmers to Families Food Boxes is appreciated, these programs deal with the immediate crisis. SNAP will help us respond to the long-term food insecurity and economic fallout of this pandemic. To support some of the hardest hit families and alleviate some of the pressure on the food banks and other charitable organizations in our state, I urge you to support increasing the maximum SNAP benefit by 15% and boosting the minimum SNAP

benefit from \$16 to \$30. And it is important that these SNAP increases remain in place as long as the economy is weak.

Kansans are pragmatic—we do what works. We know that SNAP works. It is one the most efficient economic stimulus options Congress has available to it. Fully 97% of SNAP dollars are spent in the month they are issued and that money is spent in local stores. In FY19, SNAP infused \$265 million into the Kansas economy. Those dollars helped families get the food they needed and small businesses the customers they needed, especially in our rural communities. And most importantly, it helped lift tens of thousands of Kansans out of poverty.

Kansas' elected leadership has a long tradition of leading groundbreaking bipartisan nutrition work, from President Eisenhower's Food For Peace program to Senator Dole's Food Stamp Act. I hope you will continue to provide that leadership in the Senate to push for a temporary increase to the SNAP benefit. It is one of the most effective ways we have to help those low-income Kansans who have been disproportionately affected by the economic fallout from this pandemic.

Thank you for your leadership and your support on this and other issues of importance to Kansas and Kansans.

Respectfully,

Laura Kelly
Governor of Kansas