



Food and
Nutrition
Service

JAN 16 2018

Park Office
Center

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria
VA 22302

Mr. Ricker Hamilton
Acting Commissioner
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Commissioner's Office
221 State Street
#11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011

Dear Mr. Hamilton:

Thank you for Maine's request seeking approval to waive Section 3(k) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (the Act) regarding eligible foods in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Specifically, you requested authority to operate a demonstration project in Maine to test restrictions on specific categories of food purchases with SNAP benefits.

I want to thank you for your responses to the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) questions about Maine's demonstration waiver request. We want to recognize Maine's ongoing efforts to be innovative in managing SNAP and ensuring the integrity of Maine's SNAP program. We are not though, at this time, going to authorize the request to restrict SNAP participant use of benefits for certain categories of food.

After careful consideration of your request, we have several factors that have informed this decision, including concerns about:

- Likely increase in costs of administering the SNAP program for both the state and retail community;
- Imposing significant burdens on small businesses and private retailers;
- Choosing which foods/beverages are winners and losers in the food industry as an effective means of government intervention;
- Ability to delineate nutritional benefits for allowable and excluded foods;
- Allowing the government to restrict what individuals can eat in their own homes without clear evidence of meaningful health outcomes.

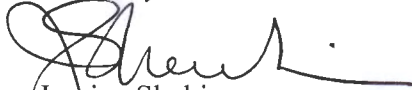
We sincerely appreciate Maine's leadership in pursuing innovative approaches to improve health outcomes, and are interested in partnering with states to support and promote incentive-based solutions. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to seek ideas regarding program flexibilities that promote self-sufficiency, customer service, and integrity, without increasing costs or regulatory burdens on stakeholders.

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Again, thank you for your interest in SNAP and your work to ensure eligible recipients have access to food assistance. USDA looks forward to working with Maine to improve health outcomes of its residents, and all Americans.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jessica Shahin
Associate Administrator
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program