



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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August 31, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

As the 2020-2021 school year begins, the nation's mayors call on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to urgently extend all child nutrition meal flexibilities through the 2020-2021 school year before they expire so that distribution continues widely and food insecurity is not further exacerbated for vulnerable children and families struggling during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

These waivers give schools, city agencies, and community organizations flexibilities in the operation of the child nutrition programs that have been critical in keeping millions of children from going hungry since March and continue to provide much needed aid to families. Altogether, Pandemic EBT (P EBT) benefits, SNAP, WIC, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, school and summer meal flexibilities and other child nutrition program waiver authorities granted by the USDA in the early months of this pandemic have been incredibly effective at keeping millions of vulnerable children from going hungry. It is unconscionable to limit access to and federal support of food resources amid a pandemic.

These important waivers and programs wholly support the Administration's "locally executed and federally managed" playbook for responding to the ongoing crisis. Since March, these waivers have allowed state food administrators, schools, city agencies, and partner organizations the local flexibility needed to adjust to a variety of different models to swiftly provide access to meals for millions of children nationwide; and P-EBT benefits have provided 14 million eligible children in 33 states with critical food assistance. As states and local governments work to safely reopen, now is not the time for the USDA to turn away from supporting critical flexibilities upon which school districts and other partner organizations rely.

As schools, states and cities determine our plans to reopen safely for the upcoming school year, including plans to provide meals through the child nutrition programs, we strongly encourage the USDA to continue providing states and our schools the local flexibility needed to safely serve

hungry children and struggling families in the most accessible locations throughout our communities:

- **Continue providing school meals to all students without requiring expensive and burdensome processes:** Expand the nationwide non-congregate waiver for school year 2020-21 to include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and allow these programs to serve all children by extending the Area Eligibility waiver for SFSP and SSO through the school year;
- **Make it easier for school districts to provide afterschool meals and snacks:** Waive the Afterschool Activity Requirement for the Afterschool Meal and Snack Programs available through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) through the 2020-21 school year. Reverse the denial of this request;
- **Ensure access to three meals a day:** Allow those providing meals through the summer meal programs (SSO and SFSP) to also serve Afterschool Meals and Snacks under CACFP and NSLP, to continue providing the same access to meals as they have since the pandemic necessitated school closures;
- **Extend P-EBT Benefits:** Support Congressional efforts to extend P-EBT benefits until the current pandemic has ended with increased flexibilities and common-sense approaches. Many barriers for expanding P-EBT still exist, making it difficult to provide these important benefits to students and families.

Communities across the country are struggling to adapt to the continued effects of the current pandemic. In many cities across the United States, families face persistent unemployment, lack of health coverage, and fear of contagion. The USDA can support these families by offering flexibility so that school districts like the one that serves my city's children can focus their energy, attention and resources on teaching and learning, rather than burdensome and unnecessary administrative procedures.

We thank you for your continued efforts to provide critical nutrition to children during this ever-changing crisis and supporting a future where all youth can thrive.

Sincerely,

Levar Stoney
Mayor of Richmond, VA
Chair, Children, Health, and Human
Services Standing Committee

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Mayor of Washington, DC
Co-Chair, Food Policy Task
Force

Bernard "Jack" Young
Mayor of Baltimore, MD
Co-Chair, Food Policy Task
Force

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The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Collin Peterson, Chair, Committee on Agriculture, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Mike Conaway, Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chair, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, U.S. Senate