

Dear

Our undersigned national, regional, state and local organizations urge immediate action to address the twin challenges of COVID-19—protecting individuals and communities against hardship and jump starting a strong economic recovery. SNAP benefit boosts can help limit the depth and duration of the human and economic tolls this crisis threatens to exact.

COVID-19 has exacerbated already too high levels of food insecurity in America. According to the Urban Institute, in the early weeks of the pandemic, one in five U.S. adults experienced food insecurity.

Also in the early weeks of COVID-19, Labor Department data document, one of every four workers filed for unemployment insurance; the April unemployment rate hit 14.7 percent; and the combined rate of unemployed, discouraged, and part-time for economic reasons workers spiked above 22 percent.

Sufficient and timely federal government action is needed to prevent even more human suffering and lost productivity in the short- and longer-terms.

SNAP is a proven countercyclical tool. Each \$1 of SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity. Participants spend those benefits quickly, with positive impacts felt up and down the food chain -- from farmers and food producers, to grocery retailers, stock clerks and local economies.

The lines for food at emergency feeding sites offer a picture of the human suffering that data can only begin to explain. This crisis demands a response that is commensurate with its scope and seriousness. For every one meal provided through the Feeding America food bank network, SNAP can provide nine meals on the normal rails of commerce. SNAP boosts must be an important part of an effective, comprehensive response to COVID-19.

It is urgent that Congress and the White House act now to provide 1) a 15 percent boost in the SNAP maximum benefit that would help all SNAP households; 2) an increase in the SNAP monthly minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30; and 3) a suspension of SNAP time limits and rules changes that would cut SNAP eligibility and benefits.

Additionally, Congress should invest in nutrition programs with proven health and economic impacts. This includes extending and expanding the Pandemic EBT program to ensure it reaches all children missing out on meals provided through the federal nutrition programs at school or child care and enables this powerful program to operate during the summer. It should provide emergency funding to support CACFP child care and after school providers and sponsors, strengthen WIC's ability to respond to the COVID crisis, and support strained schools. Additional funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) senior nutrition

programs and nutrition assistance for those in the tribes and territories will also help to address how the crisis has impacted specific populations. The next bill should also provide funding for TEFAP commodities and capacity support for food banks.

We urge Congress and the White House to take action now to limit the depth and duration of this health and economic crisis by ensuring that the basic food needs of struggling families and individuals are met.