Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Ave, SW Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to request to allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries to purchase hot food items from retailers that already accept electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.

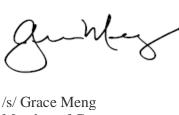
Prior to the COVID-19 public health crisis, 37 million Americans relied on SNAP benefits to buy food each month. Unfortunately, in the midst of this crisis, over 16 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits in a two-week time span. No doubt, unemployment rates will continue to skyrocket. As grocery stores struggle to keep their shelves stocked, more families will become food insecure, and those who are already food insecure will continue to face significant hurdles in feeding their families. SNAP beneficiaries also need more support when public transportation use is discouraged, and when going outside in densely populated areas is dangerous.

Under normal circumstances, SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase hot food; allowing flexibility through a waiver for the duration of the pandemic, however, would ease the burden families face to provide nutritious foods to their families. Further, for essential employees who qualify for SNAP and are risking their lives, the ability to purchase hot food will ease the burden of having to cook full meals during this stressful time. These waivers have been requested by governors across the country.

Therefore, we strongly urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to immediately issue hot food waivers for states where a major disaster has been declared in addition to a national emergency. We also call on the Food and Nutrition Service to extend its approval of hot food waivers to this pandemic national emergency. While this may differ from the "Disaster SNAP Guidance" (pg. 31) issued by your agency in July 2014, we encourage you to establish alternate and broader policy during the current public health emergency. Language in the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act (H.R. 6379) emphasized the urgency of allowing SNAP participants to purchase "hot foods" or "hot food products ready for immediate consumption" from SNAP-authorized grocers, and while this language was not included in the CARES Act, we believe that your agency has the authority to implement these waivers without this change in law.

We look forward to your response on allowing EBT retailers to accept SNAP benefits for the purchase of hot food.

Sincerely,



Member of Congress

/s/ Joe Neguse Member of Congress

/s/ Ilhan Omar Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke Member of Congress

/s/ Suzanne Bonamici Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph P. Kennedy, III Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica S. Wilson Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan Member of Congress

/s/ Kendra S. Horn Member of Congress Settem you

/s/ Adriano Espaillat Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee Member of Congress

/s/ John B. Larson Member of Congress

/s/ Eliot L. Engel Member of Congress

/s/ Raúl M. Grijalva Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin Member of Congress

/s/ Vicente Gonzalez Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush Member of Congress

/s/ Suzan DelBene Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez Member of Congress /s/ Bill Foster Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph D. Morelle Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Thompson Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes Member of Congress

/s/ G. K. Butterfield Member of Congress

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

/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragán Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Smith Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone Member of Congress

Cc:

Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

/s/ Judy Chu

Member of Congress

/s/ Rashida Tlaib Member of Congress

/s/ David Price Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr. Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Keating Member of Congress

/s/ Juan Vargas Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto Member of Congress

/s/ Daniel T. Kildee Member of Congress

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop Member of Congress