

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write in anticipation of round four of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Coronavirus Food Assistant Program's Farmers to Families Food Boxes (CFAP). As members of the New York delegation, we know that this program has played a critical role in feeding those who are facing food insecurity and we were glad to learn about the necessary fourth round of the program. As we have expressed in letters sent in September and October, miscommunication from USDA around CFAP vendors selected for round three left many food pantries in New York City suddenly without food. We write now to ask for confirmation that New York vendors will be permitted to supply *all* counties in New York adequately and for the duration of this program round, and to accept proposals for both mixed and dairy/produce/meat-only boxes.

Restrictions that forced vendors in round three to supply food to specific boroughs and counties, even if they had extra supply, left non-profits scrambling to find new partnerships with no guidance from USDA, no overlap in service provision, and nowhere to turn for help. Simultaneously, vendors who had extra supply were limited to only providing boxes to specific boroughs and counties. In a city as diverse as New York, food pantries often serve specific cultural or religious communities. If new vendors are simply providing food to those pantries that they already have relationships with, we can be sure that whole communities in New York will remain underserved.

We also urge USDA to allow vendors to provide both combination boxes and meat/dairy/produce-only boxes in order to adequately serve those who observe kosher and halal diets. Only selecting vendors who provide combination boxes eliminates the participation of kosher pantries, who often serve both kosher and halal communities.

New York City's food pantries have reported an over 600% increase in need as compared to months before the pandemic; hungry families are desperate, and many families are finding themselves turning to food pantries for the first time. This program has the potential to make a significant impact, and we hope that you will take these recommendations into consideration to ensure that all New Yorkers are able to benefit.

We urgently await a response to this letter.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator

/s/ Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator

/s/ Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/ Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress