

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 29, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write in support of the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) request that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) extend a number of school meal program waivers for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools around the country to close their buildings and shift instruction to online and distance-learning models. For many children, school breakfast and lunch may be the only healthy and regular meals they receive. We want to thank USDA for its flexibility granting waivers of school meal program requirements this past school year and this summer. The 2020-2021 school year will likely be marked by similar closures, with many children having to learn from home. The economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in millions of parents losing their jobs, and millions more students will be dependent on school-provided meals. School meal program directors must begin procuring food, equipment, and supplies and placing orders now in preparation for the upcoming school year.

We were pleased that USDA extended a number of waivers for school meal program regulatory requirements until the end of the 2020-2021 school year, including the meal pattern requirement, the parent/guardian pickup requirement, the congregate feeding requirement, and the mealtime requirement. However, to help ensure school meal program directors and staff have the certainty they need to begin preparing for the upcoming school year, we urge you to also extend the following waivers nationwide until the end of the 2020-2021 school year:

- Unexpected School Closures Waiver
- Afterschool Activity Waiver
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Parent Pick-Up Waiver
- Waiver of Child Nutrition Monitoring
- Waiver of Food Management Company Contract Duration Requirements
- Waiver of Local School Wellness Assessments
- Area Eligibility Waiver
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Waivers

Additionally, it has come to our attention that under the current regulations, the transportation costs for delivering meals to low-income students are not reimbursed by the USDA. While many school meal programs are managing these costs for the time-being, they cannot continue

absorbing them for the foreseeable future. We ask that the USDA make additional funds available to schools to assist with the cost of delivering meals to low-income students until regular school operations are restored.

During such an unprecedented crisis, we must ensure that schoolchildren have enough to eat. We thank USDA for all its work so far that helped keep children fed, and we ask that you continue doing everything you can to do the same for the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

Doug Jones
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator