

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 7, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We, the undersigned Members of Congress, implore you to exercise your existing authority under the *Families First Coronavirus Relief Act* to expeditiously extend all waivers available to schools to provide meals to children during this pandemic. Specifically, we urge extension of the waivers that allow implementation of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO), including area eligibility waivers, through the 2020-21 school year.

Doing so will prevent hunger among the 4,240,786 California children who were certified to receive free and reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the 2019-20 school year, over a million of whom live in families that do not receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. While Congress is working on additional legislation to provide relief to Americans impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the need to extend these waivers is urgent. Schools across the nation are opening now without certainty about how or if they will be able to provide meals to children.

In times of insecurity, one thing we count on is that children receive the nutrition necessary to meet their basic needs. Ensuring access to NSLP during the pandemic will not only reduce hunger and improve other health outcomes. Most immediately, addressing food insecurity is posited to lessen the risk of developmental delays and improve outcomes such as children's ability to focus and perform academically.¹

We appreciate that the Department of Agriculture extended the waivers on the SFSP and SSO, and the thresholds to provide meals to all children through August 31, 2020. However, once schools reopen for classes, whether remotely or in person, they will be required to go back to the rules under the National School Program and the School Breakfast Program unless you act. This creates a tremendous challenge when schools may be providing meals in a variety of formats, where they may be serving meals in the classroom at the same time, they are sending meals home for students not present in the school building.

¹ East, Chole N. (2016). "The Effect of Food Stamps on Children's Health: Evidence from Immigrants' Changing Eligibility." Denver, CO: The University of Denver. Retrieved from <http://www.sole-jole.org/17153.pdf>

The ability to prevent hunger among children is critical to education. For many students, school meals may be the only security they experience. As the pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of American families, it is incumbent upon us to do all we can to ensure students can continue to learn free of the pain, indignity and distraction of hunger.

All parents worry about their children, and now, more than ever before seen in this generation, the need is critical. We urge you to take immediate action to protect the health, well-being and future of our nation's students.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/

Paul Cook
Member of Congress

/s/

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/

Scott Peters
Member of Congress

/s/

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

/s/

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

/s/

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/

Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

/s/

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

/s/

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

/s/

Josh Harder
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

/s/

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress