

Dear Mr. Miniard;

Thank you for contacting me regarding the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on child nutrition programs. I appreciate your taking the time to share your concerns, as hearing from you helps me better represent Kentucky in the United States Senate.

The spread of COVID-19, the highly infectious disease commonly known as the “novel coronavirus,” has resulted in a global pandemic and for a period shut down our economy. It is not only a public health crisis, but an economic crisis, as well.

Congress has an important responsibility to steer Americans through this tumultuous time by passing legislation that provides federal relief to businesses, workers, families, and individuals across the country. Congress has addressed this crisis, so far, through three phases: the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-123), the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136).

The first phase of legislation provided over \$7 billion to bolster state response efforts, including \$9 million to Kentucky that was delivered to the state public health department and community health centers across the Commonwealth. The second phase of legislation established an emergency paid leave program, increased nutrition assistance and unemployment benefits, and required private insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid to provide coverage without cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing and related services. The CARES Act, which I introduced and led through the Senate, addressed four key goals: direct financial payments to Americans, rapid relief for small businesses and their employees, significant steps to stabilize our economy and protect jobs, and further resources for frontline health care workers. This included \$350 billion in federally guaranteed loans through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to provide urgent help to small businesses to keep workers employed during this pandemic. I was proud that the CARES Act passed the Senate by a vote of 96-0 and was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The bold legislation I introduced became the largest economic rescue package in American history, and it is already having a \$12 billion impact in Kentucky.

I also led through the Senate and to enactment on April 24, 2020 the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act (P.L. 116-139), to replenish the funding for many popular relief programs created under the CARES Act. More than 50,000 loans totaling over \$5.2 billion has been delivered to small businesses and their workers in Kentucky, over \$1.1 billion has been distributed to Kentucky health care providers, and over \$120 million was provided for testing in the Commonwealth.

In July, I introduced an additional relief package, the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act. The HEALS Act focuses on getting people back to work, supporting education for our children, and winning the healthcare fight against the virus. This legislation provides assistance for both education and child care providers to help America’s kids safely return to school. It also protects doctors, nurses, local governments, school districts, and