

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2020

The Honorable George Ervin “Sonny” Perdue III
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Given the unprecedented circumstances facing the people of our nation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to immediately implement nationwide expansion of the Online Purchasing Pilot for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as to include more retailers in the program.

The move toward accommodating online purchases for SNAP benefits has a long history of bipartisan support that began in the 2014 Farm Bill. More recently, the 2018 Farm Bill required a faster path toward scaling the pilot nationwide. The first phase of the pilot, which started in 2019, includes eight states and eight retailers.

One of the first studies to highlight the potential for expanded food security by online SNAP purchases was published late last year by researchers at Yale University and Tufts University. This study found that, in states participating in the Online Purchasing Pilot, 90 percent of people living in food deserts could receive grocery delivery to their homes¹.

As federal, state, and local governments expand social distancing measures to reduce transmissions of COVID-19, online purchases of food have become increasingly common to reduce public gathering in grocery stores. This is a critical need for many Americans, especially senior citizens who cannot leave their homes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that older adults, 65 and older, are at a higher risk for severe illness for COVID-19; this age group accounts for 8 out of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported in the U.S. In this same

¹ Brandt, Eric J., David M. Silvestri, Jerold R. Mande, et al. Availability of Grocery Delivery to Food Deserts in States Participating in the Online Purchase Pilot. JAMA Network Open. Dec 2019;2(12):e1916444.
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2756107>

demographic, we find high rates of hunger across our country as nearly 5.5 million seniors in 2017 reported to be food insecure.²

SNAP, formerly known as the food stamp program, has been our nation's foremost and most effective anti-hunger program for decades. Recent estimates reveal SNAP recipients are among our nation's most vulnerable — nearly 20 million are children, about 11 million are people with disabilities, and almost 5 million are low-income seniors.

During this time, it is crucial that we keep SNAP working for those who need it most. Therefore, we again urge you to immediately expand the Online Purchasing Pilot to all states and additional retailers.

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress



ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress



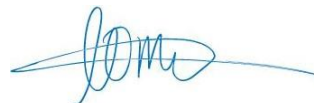
JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



CONOR LAMB
Member of Congress



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress



ILHAN OMAR
Member of Congress

² See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>;
<https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior>.



TIM RYAN
Member of Congress



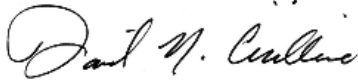
ALMA S. ADAMS, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



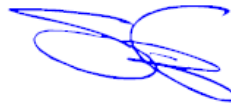
DEB HAALAND
Member of Congress



JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress



DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress



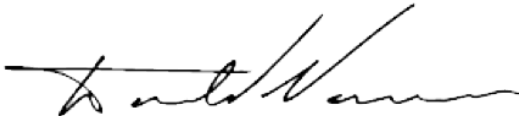
SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Member of Congress



SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress



ED CASE
Member of Congress



DONALD NORCROSS
Member of Congress



MARY GAY SCANLON
Member of Congress



SUZAN DELBENE
Member of Congress



BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress



JUDY CHU
Member of Congress



ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard

TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress

/s/

BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

/s/

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

/s/

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

/s/

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Member of Congress

/s/

AYANNA PRESSLEY
Member of Congress

/s/

JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda

HARLEY ROUDA
Member of Congress

/s/

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

/s/

DAN KILDEE
Member of Congress

/s/

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress

/s/

STEPHEN LYNCH
Member of Congress

/s/

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

/s/

GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/

JERRY McNERNEY
Member of Congress

/s/

J. LUIS CORREA
Member of Congress

/s/

DEBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress

/s/

JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress

/s/

ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

/s/

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

/s/

NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN
Member of Congress

/s/

DIANA DeGETTE
Member of Congress

/s/

KAREN BASS
Member of Congress

/s/

GRACE MENG
Member of Congress

/s/

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

/s/

ALCEE HASTINGS
Member of Congress

/s/

HALEY M. STEVENS
Member of Congress

/s/

JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

/s/

JASON CROW
Member of Congress

/s/

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

/s/

MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

/s/

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress

/s/

DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

/s/

BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress

/s/

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

/s/

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

/s/

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/

JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress

/s/

JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress

/s/

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III
Member of Congress

/s/

KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

/s/

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

/s/

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

/s/

GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress