

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

As you consider additional measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to boost and protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to address rising food insecurity and unprecedented demand at area food banks. Specifically, we ask you to increase the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent and increase the minimum monthly benefit to \$30 throughout the duration of this crisis, as well as suspend administrative rules with the potential to weaken program eligibility.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused food insecurity to double among all households and triple among households with children according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In just nine weeks, the jobless rate is now the highest since the Great Depression with 38.6 million people having sought jobless benefits. Among job losses and other health and economic strains on families, the cost of groceries has seen its highest one-month increase in almost 50 years according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic's monthly Consumer Price Index report. This is a tipping point for families who are already struggling to stretch their food dollars.

The crisis has further deepened the inequities that existed long before the onset of the pandemic, with households of color disproportionately impacted. In April 2020, more than one in three households with children, and approximately two in five Black and Hispanic households with children, were food insecure. With schools and childcare centers closed, families are stretched even further to find the resources needed to feed their children who regularly receive meals at school and childcare.

SNAP is the largest and most effective nutrition program in the country, serving as our nation's first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity. According to the latest Census data, SNAP lifted 3.4 million individuals out of poverty in 2017, including 1.5 million children. A majority of SNAP participants, nearly 70 percent, are families with children and research also demonstrates 74 percent of adult SNAP participants are working or have worked within a year of SNAP participation. Though benefits average approximately \$1.40 per person per meal, recent

studies suggest every \$1 of SNAP benefits during an economic downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity.

Increasing SNAP benefits is a proven effective way to address hunger and pump money back into the economy, particularly during an economic downturn. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, after Congress increased SNAP benefits in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, the prevalence of food insecurity fell by 2.2 percentage points among low-income households and the prevalence of very low food security fell by 2.0 percentage points. The ARRA boost also helped increase food expenditures by 5.4 percent among low-income households.

Overwhelmed food banks and emergency food providers across the country are racing to fill the immediate need, but they cannot match the reach of SNAP. According to Feeding America "for every one meal that the nation's network of food banks provides, SNAP provides nine." With so many American impacted by this crisis, it is critical that Congress work to provide a sustainable safety net that ensures a basic level of nutritional support for those struggling in our communities.

For this reason, we request the immediate consideration of legislation that will make critical investments in SNAP at a time when people need it most. Specifically, we believe that Congress must take up provisions to strengthen SNAP, bolster vulnerable communities across the country, and give a hand up to millions of people facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Boost and Support SNAP during COVID-19 Funding Letter
List of Signatories
June 29, 2020

Adam Smith	David Trone
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Al Green	Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Alan Lowenthal	Derek Kilmer
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