

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Majority Leader  
H-107, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Majority Leader  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

*Via electronic correspondence.*

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Majority Leader Hoyer, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As we navigate simultaneous health and economic crises, we respectfully urge you to increase the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit by 15 percent for all participants as part of future funding and COVID-19 relief legislation. Doing so will help address deep systemic inequities in access to food and other daily necessities that have been laid bare in our most vulnerable populations and it is crucial that we utilize every option available to eliminate these gaps in the near and distant future.<sup>[1]</sup> SNAP is one of the most important tools to meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations, with 85.3 percent of all benefits reaching households with children, seniors, and disabled residents.<sup>[2]</sup> An increase in the maximum SNAP benefit for all participants would provide a modest 15 percent boost in benefits. With grocery prices increasing at the fastest rate in 50 years, SNAP is the nation's greatest defense against hunger and helps stimulate local economies.<sup>[3]</sup>

We have all seen the lines of Americans waiting for hours to receive food due to the struggles imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis.<sup>[4]</sup> Even before

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[1] "['No end in sight': hunger surges in America amid a spiraling pandemic.](#)" Nina Lakhani and Maanvi Singh. *The Guardian*. November 25, 2020. "[Visualizing Food Insecurity.](#)" Diane Schanzenbach and Natalie Tomeh. Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research. July 14, 2020.

[2] *Facts | SNAP Strengths*. Food Research & Action Center (FRAC). 2020.

[3] "[Economic Linkages: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) Linkages with the General Economy.](#)" USDA Economic Research Service. August 20, 2019.

[4] "[Thousands in Texas line up in cars to receive food before Thanksgiving.](#)" Danielle Garand. CBS News. November 16, 2020.

the pandemic, 37 million American households struggled with food insecurity, lacking consistent access to nutritious meals despite residing in the richest country in the world.<sup>[5]</sup> While over 90 percent of food assistance in the U.S. comes from federal programs, charitable and community organizations on the frontlines are responding to tremendous need across the country. Additional federal relief from increasing SNAP and providing additional federal commodities for emergency food providers will feed hungry Americans and help food banks and other community partners keep pace with growing demand for nutritious meals. SNAP is proven to not only lift people out of poverty, but to deliver critically needed jobs and economic stimulus.<sup>[6]</sup>

Earlier this year, Congress passed legislation to expand capacity to meet the surge in demand for food assistance caused by the COVID-19 crisis through *Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Families First)* and the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. As approximately \$5.5 billion in emergency food aid through food banks and other channels are winding down, the need to expand federal nutrition programs is increasingly urgent.<sup>[7]</sup> The initial response to the pandemic provided much needed temporary assistance, but many of these short-term infusions are ending as the need for food assistance is at an all-time high. Congress must act swiftly to provide additional assistance by increasing benefits for SNAP, along with additional funding for programs such as TEFAP, as well as those that address child and senior nutrition, childcare and school nutrition, and food access for Indian Reservations and U.S. territories. Puerto Rico was already recording higher rates of food insecurity and poverty than the 50 states and the economic crisis means they are relying on federal food assistance more than ever, with capped funding that is insufficient to fully meet the significant and growing needs of residents of Puerto Rico.

The need is clear, and emergency and immediate funding as well as crucial administrative flexibilities have proven to alleviate the hunger crisis on our hands. Bolstering federal nutrition programs like SNAP will provide short-term hunger relief, while preventing long-term health and economic harm to our most vulnerable. These provisions should not sunset until the national and state emergency declarations are lifted. We must address the hunger crisis, while anticipating a long-term need for nutrition aid as we combat and recover from the immense economic and social upheaval.

With the holiday season and winter upon us, we cannot neglect one of the most basic needs. We look forward to working with you to get relief to those who need it most until we can be certain of a strong recovery.

Sincerely,

  
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

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<sup>[5]</sup> [“Food scarcity is on the rise in America as the economy reels.”](#) Aimee Pinchee. *CBS News*. June 19, 2020.

<sup>[6]</sup> [“The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier.”](#) USDA Economic Research Service. July, 2019.

<sup>[7]</sup> [“A \\$4.5 billion Trump food program is running out of money early, leaving families hungry and food assistance charities scrambling.”](#) Laura Reiley & Gregg Jeffer. *The Washington Post*. December 8, 2020.



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

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Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

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Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

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Juan Vargás  
Member of Congress

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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr  
Member of Congress

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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

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Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

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Ruben Gallego  
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Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

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Jimmy Panetta  
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