

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 8, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

The undersigned members of the House of Representatives urge the Department of Agriculture (Department) to act swiftly to ensure children have access to nutritious meals through the current school year. Specifically, we urge the Department to extend waivers enabling the implementation of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the waiving of the Area Eligibility Requirement for the entirety of 2020-2021 School Year.

As you know, the waiver authority provided by Congress and the resulting waivers issued by the Department have proven crucial for schools and non-profit partners to serve nutritious meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. With schools adapting to completely virtual and hybrid plans, food service staff will undoubtedly need to rely on program flexibilities this year. Without the waivers, there will be lasting effects on the well-being and academic success of students.<sup>1</sup> A U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey found that by mid-July 2020, as many as 17 million children were living in households in which they were not receiving enough to eat.<sup>2</sup> The number of children going hungry across this country will undoubtedly increase if the Department fails to fully utilize its available authority.

On August 31, the Department granted an extension of these waivers through December 31, 2020. While we appreciate this extension and the immediate flexibility it provides, this is only a temporary solution that leaves school officials and food service operators without the necessary flexibilities to serve meals to all students in need throughout the 2020-2021 School Year. Additionally, the Department's decision to extend the waivers until the end of the year came at the eleventh hour, resulting in unnecessary uncertainty and confusion for food service staff and the families they serve.

On August 31, 2020, you claimed that the Department may not have the funding to extend the waivers past December 31, 2020.<sup>3</sup> We believe that the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and

---

<sup>1</sup> Elaine Waxman, *Many Families Are Struggling to Put Food on the Table. We Have to Do More*, (May 7, 2020) <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/many-families-are-struggling-put-food-table-we-have-do-more>.

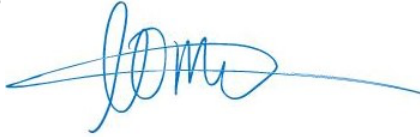
<sup>2</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships*, (August 13, 2020) <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and-employment-hardships>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Secretary Perdue makes an announcement about USDA's school meals program as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic*, Facebook (August 31, 2020) <https://www.facebook.com/USDA/videos/vb.108879087298/640017843576341/?type=2&theater>.

Other Extensions Act (H.R. 8337) removes any possible ambiguity about the authority or funding available to the Department on this matter, and therefore urge your immediate action to extend these waivers in the school meal programs.

Please contact Maria Martirosyan at [Maria.Martirosyan@mail.house.gov](mailto:Maria.Martirosyan@mail.house.gov) with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



---

Ilhan Omar  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



---

Chellie Pingree  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Joyce Beatty  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ami Bera, M.D.  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Suzanne Bonamici  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Brendan F. Boyle  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Anthony G. Brown  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cheri Bustos  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Salud Carbajal  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Tony Cárdenas  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Judy Chu  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

David Cicilline  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Steve Cohen  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jim Cooper  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Joe Courtney  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

TJ Cox  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Yvette D. Clarke  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Danny K. Davis  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Susan A. Davis  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Mark DeSaulnier  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Veronica Escobar  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Adriano Espaillat  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Dwight Evans  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bill Foster  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Marcia L. Fudge  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

John Garamendi  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jimmy Gomez  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Alcee L. Hastings  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Pramila Jayapal  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Andy Kim  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ann McLane Kuster  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Barbara Lee  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ted Lieu  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Carolyn B. Maloney  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Betty McCollum  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Grace Meng  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Joseph D. Morelle  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jerrold Nadler  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Lois Frankel  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ruben Gallego  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Raúl M. Grijalva  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Denny Heck  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Marcy Kaptur  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ro Khanna  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ron Kind  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

John B. Larson  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Andy Levin  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Alan Lowenthal  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Doris Matsui  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

James P. McGovern  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Gwen Moore  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Seth Moulton  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Tom O' Halleran  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jimmy Panetta  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

David Price  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Tim Ryan  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Linda T. Sánchez  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jan Schakowsky  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Donna E. Shalala  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jackie Speier  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bennie G. Thompson  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Rashida Tlaib  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Juan Vargas  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Nydia M. Velázquez  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Susan Wild  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ayanna Pressley  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jamie Raskin  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bobby Rush  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Michael F.Q. San Nicolas  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Mary Gay Scanlon  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Kim Schrier, M.D.  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Adam Smith  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Thomas R. Suozzi  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Dina Titus  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

David Trone  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Filemon Vela  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Peter Welch  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

John Yarmuth  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS