



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Kavanagh, Colleagues Call for Federal Support of Critical Human Services Programs

BRIAN KAVANAGH April 30, 2020

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19, SOCIAL SERVICES, HUMAN SERVICES, FEDERAL FUNDING**



On April 30, Senator Kavanagh, along with 93 colleagues across federal, state, and local government, wrote to the President in support of increased funding in the next stimulus package for critical human services programs and an expansion of such programs through executive action. The text of the legislators' letter is below; the original may be viewed via the link above.

April 30, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As members of the New York Congressional Delegation, New York State Assembly, New York State Senate, and New York City Council, we write to build upon the historic Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act - the largest stimulus relief package that has ever been implemented in the United States. We write to ask for increased funding and administrative action in the next stimulus package to support critical human services programs, as well as to urge you to exercise your full authority to expand programs through executive orders and emergency authorities.

New York has been the epicenter of this crisis; the experiences of our hospitals and frontline healthcare workers, our social service providers, our municipal employees, and our educators have served as both examples and warnings for regions facing later COVID-19 peak timelines. As such, the lessons of New York City are critical to guide the human services provisions in the next stimulus package.

- Individual Assistance: In order for emergency assistance programs across agencies to be implemented, we urge you to promptly approve New York State's application for Individual Assistance. This IA designation is critical to our ability to access federal programs in the most expansive way possible.

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Prior to the pandemic, 1.5 million New Yorkers were SNAP beneficiaries. We cannot yet calculate the number of new participants in this program as a result of the skyrocketing unemployment numbers that we have seen over the past month. We request that you suspend administrative requirements to facilitate enrollment and maintenance of benefits during this pandemic, including more flexible requirements for interviews, documentation, and verification; the expansion of USDA pilot programs that allow online SNAP purchases; issuance of waivers to permit SNAP benefits to be used for prepared and hot foods; and the removal of citizenship requirements. We also urge you to support additional increased funding for SNAP and for the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP).
- Pandemic-EBT: We request that you approve Pandemic-EBT for New York State, support increased funding for this important program, and expand it to include all children.
- Child Nutrition Programs (CNP): Children are facing acute hunger. We request that the federal government increase reimbursements to three meals per child, per day and ensure continuous coverage through the pandemic, including through summer 2020. We also request that you support increased funding for CNPs.
- Senior Nutrition Programs (SNP): We request your support for increased funding for SNPs to provide home-delivered and pre-packaged meals to low-income seniors in New York, including meal delivery services to those homebound due to COVID-19 public health emergencies.
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC): We request your support to raise the age of eligibility for child participants in WIC; increase the Cash Value Benefit for WIC participants to allow for a higher benefit level for fruit and vegetable purchases; and for Secretary Perdue to use the flexibility provided in the Families First Act to provide a waiver for WIC's cashier signature requirements.

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): We request that TEFAP be able to permit food pantries to utilize funds for salaries or volunteer stipends and waive all State and local match requirements for these expenses.
- Suspension of Public Charge: We appreciate that, as of this writing, Secretary Perdue has not implemented SNAP work requirements. We request that the Departments of Homeland Security and State follow suit and suspend implementation of the Public Charge Final Rules for all benefits.
- Designated Local Government Food Access Grants: We support grants to localities to fund emergency food access programs, including but not limited to City-operated meal distribution programs, reimbursement of costs associated with administering or supporting food donation programs, and support for non-City operated programs, including technical, administrative, training or staffing support.
- Increased Funding for Food Banks, Pantries, and Meal Delivery: We urge your support for increased funding for nonprofits offering emergency food access services during the COVID-19 pandemic, including local food banks and food pantries that are not funded by TEFAP and meal delivery services by non-profits.
- Local Government funding to support businesses essential to food supply: Provide additional funding available to local governments to ensure grocery stores and other businesses essential to the City's food supply continue to operate safely during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This should include but not be limited to funding for the administration of workforce development programs, unemployed worker/employer matching programs, and costs associated with implementing public health and safety measures.
- Federal Hazard Pay for Essential Workers: We strongly support federal hazard pay for essential workers and ensuring that it is tied to regional cost of living and paid to employers as a pass-through to reach undocumented workforce. This includes those

caring for children of essential workers, grocery workers, and critical utility workers.

- Emergency Federal Paid Sick Leave: Grant all employees and independent contractors 14 emergency paid sick days, to be reimbursed in full by the federal government.
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits: We urge the federal government to release additional funding for Unemployment Insurance Benefits, as directed by the CARES Act, to the states without delay. Numerous states, including New York, are providing enhanced unemployment benefits without having been reimbursed by the federal government. Other states have been unable to administer enhanced unemployment benefits due to a lack of available funds and resources. This will provide significant relief to states struggling with deficits as well as the individuals and families relying on this additional assistance.

Thank you for your consideration as we work together to get the United States back on its feet during this time. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Grace Meng, Member of Congress

Andrew Hevesi, New York State Assembly

Roxanne Persaud, New York State Senator

Karen Koslowitz, New York City Council

Adriano Espaillat, Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez, Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel, Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice, Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney, Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries, Member of Congress
José E. Serrano, Member of Congress
Gregory W. Meeks, Member of Congress
Thomas R. Suozzi, Member of Congress
Yvette D. Clarke, Member of Congress
Jerrold Nadler, Member of Congress
Brian Benjamin, New York State Senator
Alessandra Biaggi, New York State Senator
Andrew Gounardes, New York State Senator
Leroy Comrie, New York State Senator
John C. Liu, New York State Senator
Diane Savino, New York State Senator
Jessica Ramos, New York State Senator
Luis Sepúlveda, New York State Senator
José M. Serrano, New York State Senator
Brad Hoylman, New York State Senator
Brian Kavanaugh, New York State Senator
Liz Krueger, New York State Senator
Toby Stavisky, New York State Senator
Velmanette Montgomery, New York State Senator
Simcha Felder, New York State Senator
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Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr., New York State Senator
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Charles Barron, New York State Assembly
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Dan Quart, New York State Assembly

Harvey Epstein, New York State Assembly
Maritza Davila, New York State Assembly
Judy Griffin, New York State Assembly
Karinés Reyes, New York State Assembly
Nathalia Fernandez, New York State Assembly
Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
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Daniel O'Donnell, New York State Assembly
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Andrew Cohen, New York City Council

Adrienne Adams New York City Council

cc: Vice President Michael R. Pence

Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin, Department of Treasury

Secretary Sonny Perdue, Department of Agriculture

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf, Department of Homeland Security

Secretary Mike Pompeo, Department of State

Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell

Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer