



THE LEGISLATURE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator for New York
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Temporarily Expand SNAP in the Next Federal COVID-19 Relief Package to Lift Up Vulnerable Families and Support New York's Economy

Dear Leader Schumer and Senator Gillibrand:

We, the undersigned New York State Senators and Members of the Assembly, representing communities across New York, are grateful for your work on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help workers, employers, older Americans, and children, but much more needs to be done to ensure that our constituents can weather this crisis. During this time of soaring unemployment, financial insecurity, and growing hunger, we urge Congress to temporarily increase SNAP benefit levels in the next federal COVID-19 relief package.

New York is on the front line of responding to unprecedented disruption triggered by COVID-19. The state needs every option available to fight hunger and stimulate our economy. SNAP is a proven solution to both challenges. According to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, in April of 2020, more than 120,000 New Yorkers enrolled in SNAP. By providing families with a grocery benefit they can use to purchase food directly, SNAP is a safe, effective way to ensure that low-income children and their families can get the food they need during this difficult time.

While the FFCRA provided the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with authority to increase emergency SNAP allotments for existing SNAP households to the maximum benefit, the most vulnerable families—roughly 12 million people, including 5 million children—received no additional nutrition assistance because their household was already receiving the maximum SNAP benefit. **Given the extraordinary increase in need during this public health emergency, we urge you to temporarily expand SNAP by increasing the benefit available to all households by 15% and increasing the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30 in the next federal relief package.** This increase is needed to offset the significant loss in income and soaring unemployment resulting from COVID-19-related closures and disruptions.

Strengthening SNAP will not only feed struggling families, it will boost the economy. Economists estimate that every SNAP dollar that households redeem expands the economy by approximately \$1.50 by enabling low-income households to buy other essential items, like diapers and medication, and provides revenue directly to local businesses, thus helping maintain jobs in communities across the State of New York. For example, USDA's Economic Research Service estimates that every \$1 billion invested in SNAP supports 13,600 jobs. As the federal government continues to respond COVID-19, we urge you to quickly act to provide relief to low-income families by temporarily increasing the SNAP benefit amount.

Congress has taken crucial steps to help communities navigate this challenging time, but more is required. Given the unprecedented nature of this crisis, struggling families and their children across the state of New York need SNAP benefits more than ever before. Congress must act now to ensure that families are able to put food on the table.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Hevesi, 28th AD
Chair, NYS Assembly Committee on
Social Services

Roxanne J. Persaud, 19th SD
Chair, NYS Senate Committee on
Social Services

Nily Rozic, 25th AD
Chair, Office of State-Federal
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Richard Gottfried, 75th AD
Kimberly Jean-Pierre, 11th AD
Joseph Lentol, 50th AD
Barbara Lifton, 125th AD
Donna Lupardo, 123rd AD
William Magnarelli, 129th AD
John T McDonald III, 108th AD
Karen McMahon, 146th AD
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