



CONGRESS OF THE
UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, DC



THE LEGISLATURE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY, NY

April 29, 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 thank you for your role in implementing the historic Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act - the largest stimulus relief package that has ever been implemented in 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 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 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 offered to non-City operated programs, including technical, administrative, training or staffing support.
- **Increased Funding for Food Banks, Pantries, and Meal Delivery:** We urge your support of 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 to administer 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 tying 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, and thank you for everything you are doing 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 Senate

Karen Koslowitz
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