



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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March 17, 2022

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson
Republic Leader
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Thompson:

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased economic hardship across the United States, compelling many families to make difficult decisions and tradeoffs as they worry about how to afford food. During the pandemic, while many households turned to federal nutrition programs for the first time, those households with already low incomes found themselves depending even more on federal nutrition programs to meet their nutrition needs. Expanding eligibility and increasing benefit levels of federal nutrition programs lifted millions of Americans out of poverty during this challenging time.

Unfortunately, the current expanded eligibility and increased benefit levels are temporary and will end when the COVID-19 public health emergency ceases, even though millions of Americans will continue to struggle to make ends meet. For millions of SNAP participants, this will mean a decrease of \$82 per person per month when SNAP emergency allotments tied to the public health emergency end. As families make difficult decisions around affording food, medications, housing, and more, increased food insecurity will likely lead to adverse health outcomes, creating additional burdens on our already strained healthcare systems. The decrease in SNAP benefits will also reduce economic activity and hurt grocery stores and local food businesses that have been serving our residents throughout the pandemic.

Increased food insecurity will also put additional strain on the non-profit emergency food organizations that have faithfully served our residents but are experiencing donor fatigue and supply chain challenges. Charities can supplement food resources but cannot fill the gap left by diminished government support. For every meal a food bank provides, SNAP provides nine.

As America's mayors, we write to urge you to consider and vote for the following bills to promote food security and equity in our cities and the nation, both during COVID-19 and beyond:

1. The **Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021 (H.R. 4077/S. 2192)** would improve SNAP access and benefit amounts, including by replacing the Thrifty Food Plan with the Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for calculating SNAP allotments.
2. The **Enhanced Access to SNAP (EATS) Act of 2021 (H.R. 1919/S. 2515)** would permanently increase access to SNAP for college students by removing SNAP work requirements for people attending college at least half time.
3. The **Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2021 (H.R. 1753)** would end time limits on SNAP eligibility, which will support food security for people seeking full-time work.
4. The **Lifting Immigrant Families Through Benefits Access Restoration (LIFT the BAR) Act of 2021 (H.R. 5227)** would increase immigrant access to health care and nutrition assistance by eliminating the five-year bar for access to Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.
5. The **Making Essentials Available and Lawful (MEAL) Act of 2021 (H.R. 2837/S. 2667)** would remove restrictions on SNAP and TANF for people with prior drug felony convictions and allow incarcerated persons to apply for SNAP and TANF prior to release.
6. The **ASSET Act (H.R.3822/S. 1809)** would help low-income households with modest savings continue to receive assistance by eliminating asset limits in SNAP, TANF, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and raising asset limits in the SSI program.

These bills are consistent with the adopted policy of The United States Conference of Mayors and strongly supported by the organization. Together, they would prevent millions of Americans from falling into food insecurity at the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency. They would also help to protect the food security and well-being of people across the United States and ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to thrive and prosper. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,



Mayor Muriel Bowser
District of Columbia
Co-Chair
Food Policy Task Force



Mayor Brandon Scott
Baltimore, MD
Co-Chair
Food Policy Task Force



Mayor Levar Stoney
Richmond, VA
Chair
Children, Health and
Human Services
Standing Committee

cc. Members, United States Senate and United States House of Representatives