



September 10, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization working to end hunger in the State of Maryland. We do this by utilizing federal and state nutrition programs and by strengthening their effectiveness, increasing their participation, engaging with community partners, and providing education to the public and to policymakers.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a critically important tool in addressing food insecurity, especially for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five.

We thank USDA for the agency's actions to extend the ability to serve meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) through December 31, 2020. Allowing school districts and sponsor organizations to use this vital program will ensure that these meal providers are better able to meet the unprecedented need of their communities by removing barriers to serving meals as well as removing barriers for the families and children being served. However, more needs to be done to ensure that younger children and their families are being provided for by extending waiver flexibilities for all key federal nutrition programs, specifically for WIC.

As the economic and health impacts of the pandemic persist, it has become clear that we are facing a hunger crisis unlike any other. In Maryland, the number of applications to receive SNAP assistance increased by 400% between the months of April and May. Currently, Maryland is experiencing an all-time high in SNAP usage with nearly 850,000 participants relying on this critical nutrition assistance program. However, due to the unprecedented levels of unemployment and economic uncertainty, families need more support to help keep food on the table.

As the September 30 deadline approaches for the flexibilities extended to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), we urge USDA to use the authority granted by Congress through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to extend these waivers, which permit WIC providers to continue providing services through telehealth models, certify new participants remotely, and expand the allowable food items for WIC shoppers. These waivers have been hugely successful in allowing WIC to expand access and remove barriers that have long plagued the program and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. By providing these waivers, USDA has helped WIC to grow both in its use of innovative technologies but also in its reach and participation. As safety concerns continue to grow among participants, WIC providers must maintain their ability to address these concerns by providing remote services to the pregnant



individuals, new parents, infants, and young children that are relying on WIC assistance to remain healthy during these uncertain times.

Please help WIC to continue supporting healthy pregnancies, healthy babies, and healthy kids throughout the pandemic by extending the waivers that remove barriers to the healthy foods, nutrition services, and breastfeeding support so desperately needed during this global pandemic.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Wilson
Director
Maryland Hunger Solutions

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