

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

As we work towards another COVID-19 relief package, we write to urge you to include authority for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to grant states waivers to allow college students to access the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during the pandemic.

As you know, COVID-19 has increased food insecurity across the country. Feeding America estimates that an additional 17.1 million Americans could become food insecure due to the COVID-19 economic crisis, an increase of 46%. College students, too, are feeling the economic pain from COVID-19. As schools across the country shut their doors and move to remote learning, students who relied on school food banks or on-campus food programs have seen those resources disappear. While the Families First Coronavirus Response Act suspended SNAP work requirement for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), this relief was not extended to college students. As stay at home orders remain in place, students that have lost their jobs are now also at risk of losing essential food benefits because they can no longer meet SNAP requirements and many newly displaced working college students cannot qualify for food benefits.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, 30 states, plus the District of Columbia, have applied for a waiver to allow students to qualify for SNAP benefits, regardless of their employment status. These claims were denied by the USDA, citing a lack of legal authority to grant such waivers. To provide governors the flexibility to respond to this crisis, and parity for student SNAP recipients, we urge you to include in the next COVID-19 relief package a requirement that USDA approve these student eligibility waivers submitted by states.

Thank you for your attention to this important request to ensure that our college students have access to the resources they need during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Reed

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Jack Reed  
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy

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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan

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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders

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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

/s/ Patrick Leahy

Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator