



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

August 20, 2020

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

Thank you for your letter dated August 14, 2020, asking the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to extend all nationwide waivers for unexpected school closures that allow for the operation of the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option, including non-congregate and area eligibility, for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

USDA continues to review waivers, including extension requests. We continue to examine and utilize all options within our statutory and budget authority and with the funding that Congress provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. While we want to provide as much flexibility as local school districts need during this pandemic, the scope of this request is beyond what USDA currently has the authority to implement and would be closer to a universal school meals program which Congress has not authorized or funded. Should Congress choose to go in this direction, USDA stands ready to provide technical assistance.

Americans are a generous people, and there are already opportunities for breakfast, lunch, and snacks, and weekend meals for children in need. FNS continues to work tirelessly with schools, states, and partners in all ways possible within our statutory and budget authority and with the funding that Congress provided in response to the pandemic through the CARES Act to help them leverage our programs' services and flexibilities to ensure children receive nutritious meals during these uncertain times.

As we transition out of the Summer, the National School Breakfast and Lunch program helps increase accountability to ensure children in need receive meals. USDA has provided a range of flexibilities that extend through all of School Year 2020-2021 to ensure students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals will still be able to receive their meals. These flexibilities allow schools to provide meal service through National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program in ways that meet local needs, whether they are operating virtually, in-person, or under a hybrid model. Through waivers that USDA has provided for the full school year, schools can utilize bus routes, operate curbside pickup and send children home with multiple meals at one time.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) continues to work tirelessly with schools, states, and partners in all ways possible within our statutory and budget authority to help them leverage our programs' services and flexibilities to ensure children receive nutritious meals during these uncertain times.

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Again, thank you for your correspondence, as USDA continues our commitment to “Do Right and Feed Everyone.” If you need further assistance, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being shared with Congressman Scott.

Sincerely,



Sonny Perdue
Secretary