

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2020

The Honorable George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue III
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

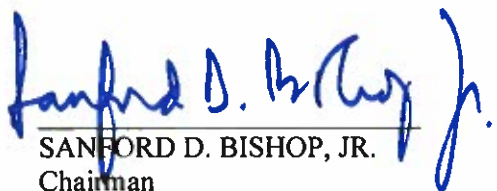
Ahead of your testimony tomorrow before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, we write to express our concerns regarding the impact of the current outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and urge you to take decisive action to ensure program access.

States and localities are beginning to employ social distancing strategies as a means of containing the virus. For some, this has meant temporary school closures which jeopardize access to school meals for students, including the nearly 22 million children who rely on free and reduced school lunches.

While we applaud USDA's recent efforts to accommodate schools in California and Washington, we believe more can be done, such as waiving the congregate meal requirement for schools outside of area eligibility. Additionally, USDA should work with the Department of Education to provide states with the resources and guidance to develop plans that detail how students will receive access to child nutrition programs *before* a school shuts down.

Furthermore, with regard to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), we urge you to immediately suspend any Department rulemaking that would reduce benefits or affect program eligibility. Enacting any such changes during this time will only exacerbate current economic anxiety and unnecessarily increase the burden on the very people who need assistance. Instead, as considerations of a broader economic stimulus package progresses, we strongly believe expanding the SNAP benefit will be a vital anti-recession tool, just as it was when Congress included a temporary benefit boost in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*.

We remain committed to working with you to ensure American families have the support they need at this uncertain time.



SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives