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United States Senate

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Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write today regarding flexibilities provided by Congress, issued by the Secretary of Agriculture, and utilized by state agencies and other stakeholders to continue feeding those in need during this COVID-19 pandemic emergency period. We appreciate the Department's recent extension of several of those flexibilities, most notably, existing school and summer feeding program waivers.

Therefore, we ask for your continued, shared commitment in providing certainty for those served by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) by also extending existing WIC program flexibilities, provided through emergency measures through September 30, 2020, as authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

We appreciate the Department's actions to utilize administrative authorities as well as to implement temporary, emergency authorities provided by Congress in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to waive certain regulations in order to more effectively feed children during school closures and support social distancing.

WIC program flexibilities granted by the Department for the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, through state agencies, have helped eligible pregnant women, mothers, and their infants and young children access and use food benefits while navigating social-distancing protocols of their own, as well as those followed by state agencies, health providers, and vendors. Some examples include temporarily: allowing remote and extended benefits issuance to reduce in-person paperwork exchanges; suspending the "physical presence" requirement prior to enrollment or re-enrollment to reduce unnecessary in-person visits to state agency or clinic offices, and allowing vendor food substitution and stocking flexibility. Month to month extensions are challenging for states to plan effectively and increase administrative burden. Extending these existing state-based waivers through September 30, 2020, would provide certainty and availability to WIC participants, providers and vendors navigating variable phased re-opening procedures across public, private, and health sectors.

We appreciate Food and Nutrition Service's continued efforts to address this unprecedented challenge, and we encourage the agency to continue engaging with state agencies, participants and stakeholders during this pandemic emergency situation.

Sincerely,



Pat Roberts
Chairman



Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Mike Braun
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