

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 1, 2010

The Honorable Jacob Lew
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Lew:

We are writing to you out of concern for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and a possible change in benefits for millions of Americans during these difficult economic times. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allows states to develop a Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), which helps simplify the application and paperwork necessary to determine a family's benefits under SNAP.

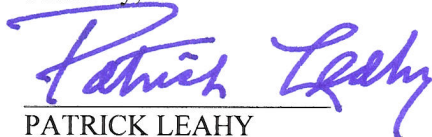
Recently, USDA approved a three month extension of a blanket waiver to the requirement that states update their SUA formula. This extension is currently set to expire on January 1, 2011 and we understand that USDA has conducted a thorough policy review on the issue, and the Administration is now considering possible options for how to address the SUA waiver.

Over the last several months, we, along with many of our colleagues, have paid close attention to this issue. With the economy still recovering from the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and unemployment approaching ten percent, we believe it is unwise to reduce nutrition assistance benefits at this time. Furthermore, it is estimated that a disproportionate percentage of those impacted are either elderly or individuals with disabilities, two groups who are particularly vulnerable to issues relating to their food security. Furthermore, due to reductions in federal and state fuel assistance programs we expect that many of these families will also receive smaller fuel assistance grants this winter.

As USDA and the Office of Management and Budget consider policy options to address this issue, we hope that you will share our concerns about the tremendous hardships American families will experience if their SNAP benefits are reduced. We urge you to pursue a course that will sustain the existing level of benefits to help these families make it through this difficult winter season.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible on this very important issue.

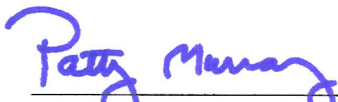
Sincerely,



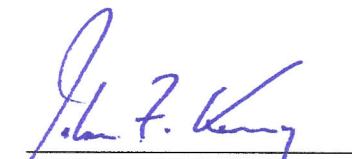
PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator



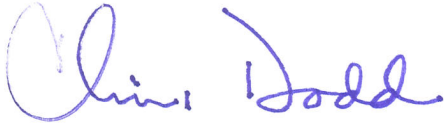
JOHN F. KERRY
United States Senator



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator



KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



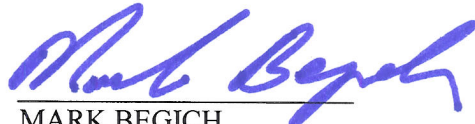
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator



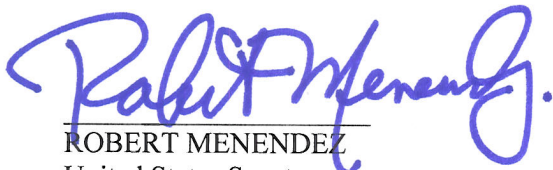
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG
United States Senator



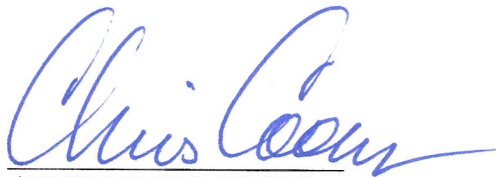
JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



MARK BEGICH
United States Senator



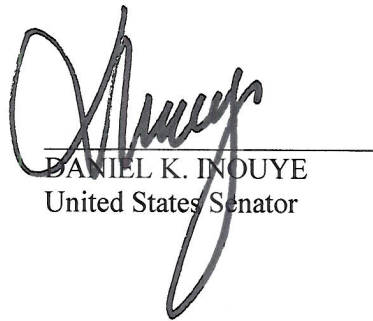
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



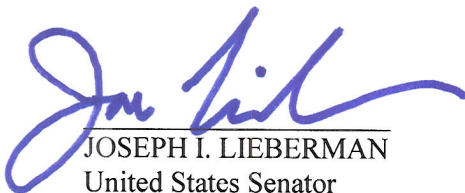
CHRISTOPHER COONS
United States Senator



DANIEL K. AKAKA
United States Senator



DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator



JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN
United States Senator