

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you consider legislative priorities in any upcoming stimulus packages to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we urge you to incorporate provisions that will address the needs of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants. SNAP is one of our country's most vital social safety nets, and it will continue to play a critical role in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty throughout the COVID-19 health crisis. In light of this significance, we urge you to incorporate provisions that will: (1) boost the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent; (2) increase the monthly minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30; and (3) place a hold on harmful rules proposed by the Executive Branch that weaken SNAP eligibility and benefits.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, a growing number of states are following guidance from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by encouraging social distancing and issuing stay-at-home orders. As a result, thousands of industries were interrupted, and millions of Americans were thrown into financial uncertainty. During this time of crisis, Americans must be able to turn to government benefits such as SNAP to put food on the table. In 2019, SNAP helped feed 38 million people across the country, but that number is likely to increase in the coming weeks and months, as a record-high 3.3 million people applied for unemployment benefits in just the last week.

The average SNAP benefit comes to approximately \$1.40 per person per meal, and almost half of all SNAP families use up their entire benefit at the beginning of the month. At the height of the Great Recession in 2009, the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act helped prevent large increases in poverty by increasing the maximum SNAP benefit by 13.6 percent, totaling to \$1.74 per person per meal. In order to mitigate the inevitable disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic will bring, Congress must make a similar investment, by increasing maximum benefits by at least 15 percent. To that same effect, increasing the monthly minimum

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SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30, will go a long way in helping single and family households keep food on the table.

Finally, Congress must also put a stop to harmful rules from the Executive Branch that will weaken SNAP eligibility and benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2019, October 2019, and December 2019 respectively, the Trump Administration published three rules that if enacted, will: (1) severely limit broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) and effectively throw hundreds of thousands of children off of school meal participation; (2) strip states of their much needed flexibility to set their own Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) using state-based and current energy cost information; and (3) eliminate state flexibility to waive certain work requirements and exemptions for SNAP participants who are able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). The BBCE and ABAWDs rules circumvent congressional intent as laid-out in the 2018 Farm Bill and short of rescinding them, all three rules, at the very least should be stayed until the economy shows significant improvement.

We thank you for your consideration and close attention to these urgent matters.

Sincerely,



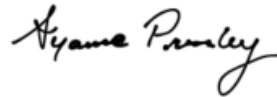
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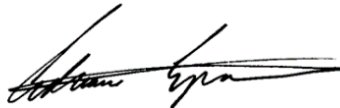
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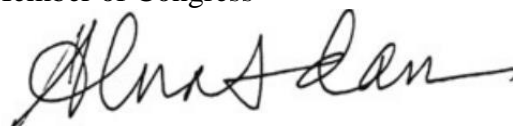
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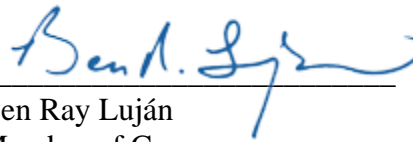
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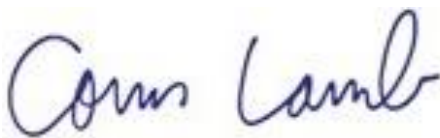
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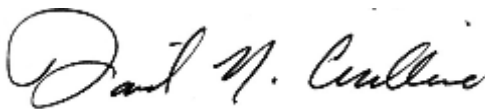
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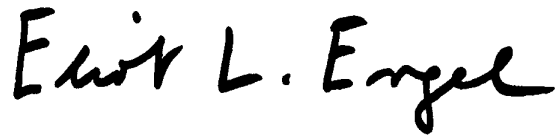
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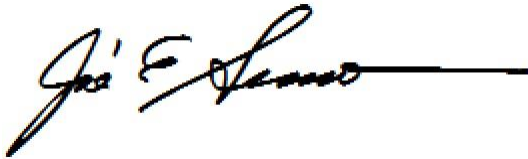
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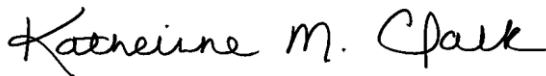
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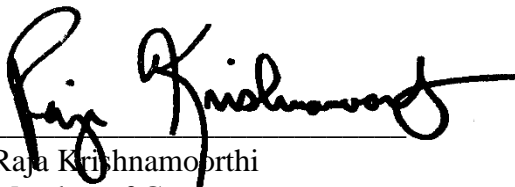
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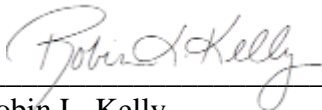
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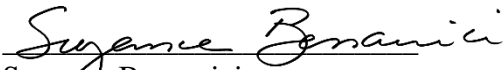
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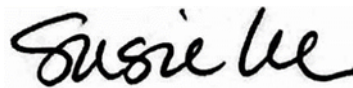
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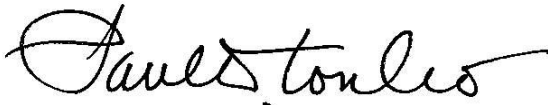
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