

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write in support of the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) request that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) extend a number of school meal program waivers for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools around the country to close their buildings and shift instruction to online and distance-learning models. For many children, school breakfast and lunch may be the only healthy and regular meals they receive. We want to thank USDA for its flexibility granting waivers of school meal program requirements this past school year and this summer. The 2020-2021 school year will likely be marked by similar closures, with many children having to learn from home. The economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in millions of parents losing their jobs, and millions more students will be dependent on school-provided meals. School meal program directors must begin procuring food, equipment, and supplies and placing orders now in preparation for the upcoming school year.

We were pleased that USDA extended a number of waivers for school meal program regulatory requirements until the end of the 2020-2021 school year, including the meal pattern requirement, the parent/guardian pickup requirement, the congregate feeding requirement, and the mealtime requirement. However, to help ensure school meal program directors and staff have the certainty they need to begin preparing for the upcoming school year, we urge you to also extend the following waivers nationwide until the end of the 2020-2021 school year:

- Unexpected School Closures Waiver
- Afterschool Activity Waiver
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Parent Pick-Up Waiver
- Waiver of Child Nutrition Monitoring
- Waiver of Food Management Company Contract Duration Requirements
- Waiver of Local School Wellness Assessments
- Area Eligibility Waiver
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Waivers

Additionally, it has come to our attention that under the current regulations, the transportation costs for delivering meals to low-income students are not reimbursed by the USDA. While many school meal programs are managing these costs for the time-being, they cannot continue absorbing them for the foreseeable future. We ask that the USDA make additional funds available to schools to assist with the cost of delivering meals to low-income students until regular school hours are restored.

During such an unprecedented crisis, we must ensure that schoolchildren have enough to eat. We thank USDA for all its work so far that helped keep children fed, and we ask that you continue doing everything you can to do the same for the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,