

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to request an extension of flexibilities previously granted by the USDA under existing authorities to allow local food agencies to deliver Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) food packages through private partners. We applaud the USDA's original accommodation, which ensured California's seniors did not have to risk exposure to the novel coronavirus to receive much-needed food. Given the ongoing health risks to this population, from both the pandemic and poor air quality due to fires raging across California, we urge an immediate extension to allow our food banks to resume home deliveries and help our seniors.

CSFP serves low-income seniors with a monthly food package provided by the USDA and distributed through local food banks. In response to concerns that many CSFP recipients would be unable to leave their homes during the pandemic to receive their full food packages, your agency granted administrative flexibilities that allowed local food agencies in California to use private partners to deliver CSFP food packages. This critical and timely action helped address food insecurity for thousands of seniors, some of whom had not needed to rely on the program for sustenance before the global pandemic.

After a short extension, the USDA allowed these common-sense CSFP flexibilities to expire at the end of June, which has had a devastating impact on our food banks' ability to continue to serve those in need. Without the accommodations, California food banks were forced to cease their delivery partnerships and revert to a pickup model at a time when most seniors are unable or unwilling to leave the protection of their homes to access food. According to data provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), statewide CSFP utilization for the month of July dropped to 84,981 seniors served, down from a high of 120,500 seniors in May, representing a decrease of 30 percent. In certain areas of the state, the effect has been even more devastating: the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank served 45 percent fewer seniors in July compared to June, the San Francisco Food Bank served 43 percent fewer, and the Community Action Partnership of Orange County served 34 percent fewer.

These drops in service mean that nearly 40,000 thousand seniors statewide did not receive their CSFP food package in July due to an inability to leave the safety of their home. There are serious concerns that this trend will only get worse in the coming months as seniors continue to follow the advice of public health officials to stay home, as reflected by the many calls our food banks are fielding from seniors asking for their meals to be safely delivered directly to their homes.

Although alternative models have been explored by the state to identify a delivery solution that ensures all CSFP participants can receive food packages under the statutory requirements of the program, there are technical, logistical, and cost challenges that prohibit third party providers from being able to deliver the CSFP food packages per the regulations of the program. To provide home delivery of CSFP food packages using existing networks of delivery drivers, at no cost to the state, food banks, or seniors, it is essential that the packages be integrated into the existing delivery models of private partners—meaning the food packages need to be able to be delivered in the same way as any other package. It is not feasible to require delivery drivers to modify their process for this particular delivery by requesting identification from the recipient and collecting a signature at the time of delivery. These requirements are not standard practice. Furthermore, requiring perishable cheese to be included in a package of otherwise shelf-stable foods necessitates a delivery window of four hours or less, which is not currently possible to guarantee. To solve these challenges within the delivery models available would either be impossible or take a significant investment of money from the food banks at a time when their resources are already stretched thin.

The moment continues to call for the flexibilities the USDA had deemed necessary at the outset of the global pandemic. It is now intensified by the impact of California's wildfires on the air quality, compounding the health risks to our seniors. We support the request made by the CDSS and local food agencies asking for flexibilities that will allow them to resume no-contact deliveries of CSFP food packages through private partners for the duration of the public health emergency. Specifically, we ask that the USDA reapprove the following flexibilities:

1. Allow for the delivery of CSFP food packages to a senior's home without the identification of the recipient needed at the time of delivery;
2. Eliminate the requirement for a signature at the time of delivery; and
3. Eliminate the requirement that perishable cheese be included in all delivered CSFP food packages.

We have the availability of food for our seniors and the means of getting the food to their homes. Please continue your efforts to ensure that our seniors do not have to risk their health to overcome their hunger.

We thank you for your time and appreciate your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
*Member of Congress*



Adam B. Schiff  
*Member of Congress*



Jimmy Panetta  
*Member of Congress*

### **Members Signing**

/s/ John Garamendi  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Doris Matsui  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Josh Harder  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Jackie Speier  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Anna G. Eshoo  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Salud O. Carbajal  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Brad Sherman  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Ted Lieu  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Karen Bass  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Mark Takano  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ J. Luis Correa  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Harley Rouda  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Scott H. Peters  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Jared Huffman  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Ami Bera, M.D.  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Mark DeSaulnier  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Jim Costa  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Zoe Lofgren  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Julia Brownley  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Pete Aguilar  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Jimmy Gomez  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Linda T. Sánchez  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Maxine Waters  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Katie Porter  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Mike Levin  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Susan A. Davis  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Mike Thompson  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Jerry McNerney  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Barbara Lee  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Ro Khanna  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ TJ Cox  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Judy Chu  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Norma J. Torres  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Lucille Roybal-Allard  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragán  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Alan Lowenthal  
*Member of Congress*

/s/ Juan Vargas  
*Member of Congress*