

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 26, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to you regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the ability for recipients to use SNAP benefits to purchase SNAP eligible products online. As you are aware, there is currently a pilot program that allows SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase SNAP products online in Alabama, Iowa, New York, Oregon and Washington. The State of New Jersey was selected in April 2019 by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) as eligible to participate in the SNAP online purchasing pilot program though has not yet been formally admitted to the pilot program. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, we request that USDA immediately allow New Jersey SNAP recipients to participate in this pilot program.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 virus has been classified as a pandemic. The State of New Jersey has declared a state of emergency and the Governor has issued an order to “shelter in place” that bans public gatherings and closes nonessential businesses. The order excepts trips made to grocery stores. Unfortunately, many SNAP recipients live in “food deserts” and may be many miles from the nearest grocery store so a trip that involves public transit or even an extended walk presents an increased risk. Furthermore, with schools closed in the state, parents are now full-time caregivers and a trip to a grocery store with or without a child becomes an extra burden and health risk. Thus, we believe that SNAP recipients should have the same opportunity as all New Jerseyans to be able to shop for groceries online and avoid unnecessary health risks.

Allowing New Jerseyans to use their SNAP benefits for online purchases will protect them and all New Jerseyans as we continue to fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We request that USDA make this authorization immediately in order to protect New Jersey SNAP recipients. We look forward to your response no later than March 30, 2020.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bill Pascrell Jr.
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator