



March 11, 2022

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Ranking Member John Boozman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Chairwoman Jahana Hayes
House Agriculture Committee
Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations Subcommittee

Ranking Member Don Bacon
House Agriculture Committee
Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations Subcommittee

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairwoman Hayes, and Ranking Member Bacon:

As the nation transitions to an end of the COVID public health emergency (PHE), the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Human Services Administrators (NACHSA) urge you to ease the transition from current pandemic-related administrative flexibilities within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Specifically, we ask you to extend these flexibilities for six months after the expiration of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) to ensure that county agencies can continue to efficiently and effectively serve our residents in need of nutritional support.

As part of our role as the front line of the social safety net, counties in ten states administer the SNAP program representing 32 percent of SNAP participants nationwide. Counties operating SNAP often contribute significant levels of local funds to meet the administrative and supplemental costs of running the program. According to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's FY 2019 State Activity Report, these ten county-administered states accounted for: \$18.2 billion in SNAP benefits (32.6 percent of the national total) and 11.4 million SNAP participants (31.9 percent of the national total).

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provided necessary flexibilities to enable counties to continue to provide food assistance during the pandemic to eligible individuals. Our agency staff used those flexibilities to modify procedures to receive applications, issue benefits and meet SNAP reporting requirements without affecting program integrity. As the pandemic continued, a significant number of

our human services eligibility workers left their jobs. Those double-digit percentage decreases in staff have placed enormous stress on our ability to meet the needs of our communities for SNAP, Medicaid and other federal supports.

Given that many of the families receiving SNAP also have Medicaid coverage, county workers will face a deluge of work after the PHE ends to re-determine the eligibility of current individuals participating in those programs while also determining eligibility for new applicants. The convergence of the loss of administrative flexibilities alongside a diminished workforce will make it difficult to serve our citizens in a timely manner.

In light of these unique circumstances, NACo and NACHSA urge Congress to provide a six-month extension of the SNAP flexibilities provided under FFCRA upon the expiration of the PHE so that counties can mitigate the impact of undertaking a massive number of eligibility determinations simultaneously. A time-limited extension will allow counties to continue to serve our communities in a timely and efficient manner.

Thank you for considering this request. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Rachel Mackey, NACo Associate Legislative Director for Human Services and Education at rmackey@naco.org or 202.661.8843 or Tom Joseph, NACHSA Washington Representative at tj@paragonlobbying.com or 202.449.0398.

Sincerely,



Claudia Tuck
NACHSA President
Director, Community Support Services
Alachua County, Florida



Matthew Chase,
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Counties (NACo)