



April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The undersigned organizations working to enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families write to urge Congress to ensure all people with disabilities are able to remotely use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds and access food delivery services during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

As the crisis continues, more and more individuals and families will lose access to paychecks and will see their households grow more food insecure. In order to end the outbreak as quickly as possible, we need to slow the spread and encourage people to stay home. For people with disabilities, the decision to self-isolate can sometimes be a matter of life or death. If our nation is serious about protecting those most at risk from the virus while also slowing the spread, then we need to take additional steps to ensure individuals with disabilities are able to access the food they need while remaining at home.

That requires doing more to expand meal delivery options along with increasing funding for SNAP. Higher benefit levels are needed, and these increases must be included in any proposal to support all food insecure individuals and families including people with disabilities. We urge Congress to boost SNAP maximum benefits by 15 percent, increase the minimum SNAP benefit to \$30, and suspend all SNAP administrative rules that would terminate or reduce benefits.

These increases must also advance alongside efforts to expand delivery options for SNAP participants. Recent press reports and stories from individuals with disabilities attempting to obtain groceries online illuminate that many are fearful of contracting the disease in a grocery store or infecting their families upon their return home. Additionally, some people with disabilities cannot drive or do not have access to an accessible vehicle and rely on public transit

and paratransit to obtain groceries. Public transit service across the country is experiencing a severe reduction in operation because of the pandemic thus limiting people's ability to shop in person. The culmination of these issues result in a choice for many between feeding themselves and potentially putting their lives at risk by going to a grocery store.

Congress should act quickly to authorize and encourage the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to find innovative ways to help ensure beneficiaries with disabilities have access to food during the pandemic. These tactics would help SNAP recipients with disabilities better comply with 'stay at home' orders and avoid forcing individuals to choose between feeding themselves and potentially increasing their risk of infection and illness at a grocery store. Congress should immediately take the following steps:

1. Work with USDA to expand the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot program to all states and territories and extend eligibility for the program to more retailers.
2. Direct USDA to notify retailers of the existing opportunities through which they can deliver groceries and permit SNAP participants to have their EBT card swiped at either the point of home delivery or when the order is picked up at the store.
3. Authorize public-private partnerships between USDA and authorized SNAP retailers to support food delivery during the emergency by providing funding through state agencies to reimburse retailers or community based organizations for delivery fees for SNAP participants.

We need to ensure individuals have the resources to protect themselves, and by extension, their communities, as long as the COVID-19 crisis lasts. Individuals with disabilities who are at higher risk of infection cannot afford to wait. Again, we urge Congress to act quickly on this request and thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact Cyrus Huncharek (cyrus.huncharek@ndrn.org), Rylin Rodgers (rrodgers@aucd.org), or Erin Prangle (EPrangle@nacdd.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network

CC: Senator Pat Roberts, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Representative Collin Peterson,
Representative Michael Conaway