



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic 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

May 14, 2020

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

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) write in support of policy changes that would allow people with disabilities to safely utilize their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits during this pandemic. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

The growing outbreak of COVID-19 across the United States creates specific issues for people with disabilities. The disability community includes millions of individuals with underlying or pre-existing conditions who are, and will be, particularly at risk as COVID-19 continues to spread across the country. These individuals will face high risk of complications and death if exposed to the outbreak and they need to isolate themselves for protection. This makes access to online ordering of groceries, meals, and needed supplies critical and, for many, a matter of life and death. We have previously highlighted our support for boosting SNAP maximum benefits, increasing the minimum SNAP benefit, suspending all SNAP administrative rules that would terminate or reduce benefits, and the absolutely crucial expansion of the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot to ensure that people with disabilities can utilize SNAP benefits to safely obtain groceries while self-isolating.

For these reasons, we strongly support Representative Omar's SNAP Online Purchasing Flexibility Act, [H.R.6510](#), which would automatically expand the Online Purchasing Pilot nationwide. This is also why we strongly support Senator Casey's Food Assistance for Kids and

Families During COVID-19 Act of 2020, [S. 3563](#), which would provide authorization and funding for grocery delivery services via SNAP. Both bills will allow people with disabilities to utilize their SNAP benefits while protecting themselves and their families in this time of crisis.

Alongside efforts to further expand delivery options for SNAP participants to ensure that people with disabilities can remain safely isolated, we also believe that other improvements are necessary given [national issues with the food supply](#), due to both [COVID-19 outbreaks](#) and [purchasing patterns](#). Congress has recognized for the past several decades that people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals experiencing homelessness need more flexibility in access to restaurant meals via the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program.¹ We believe that in this time when food is not always available, it is particularly important that this program be expanded. We support Representative Panetta's and Senator Murphy's SNAP COVID-19 Anti-Hunger Restaurant Relief for You Act of 2020 which would automatically extend the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program across the United States for the duration of the emergency and ensure that low-income individuals who rely on SNAP can access the food that is available to them.

We are grateful to see many of these issues reflected in the recently released H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (HEROES Act). This bill increases SNAP benefits and suspends proposed rules we opposed last year that would make it more difficult for people with disabilities to access needed nutrition assistance.² While the legislation would not expand the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot nationally or include payments for delivery fees, it does require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to publish state requests to participate in the pilot which would be extremely helpful for advocates and states seeking to expand the program. We also strongly support the emergency hot food purchasing authority that would allow SNAP participants to purchase hot food from existing SNAP retailers.

However, we believe that Congress can and should go further, by including all of the discussed boosts to SNAP and the full content of these bills in the next COVID-19 relief package to ensure that people with disabilities and others who rely on SNAP remain safe and healthy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Food security must be accessible and safe for people with disabilities during this turbulent time. We look forward to working with Congress on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact Cyrus Huncharek (cyrus.huncharek@ndrn.org) or Bethany Lilly (lilly@thearc.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

American Association of People with Disabilities
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Public Representation
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Justice in Aging

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
The Arc of the United States

¹ People with disabilities and older adults have been able to purchase restaurant meals since 1978, while individuals experiencing homelessness were added in 1996. See A PRIMER ON THE RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM IN CALIFORNIA: PREVENTING HUNGER AMONG THE ELDERLY, DISABLED & HOMELESS IN THE GOLDEN STATE (February 2012), <https://wclp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/YGA-12161-SNAP-doc1-1.pdf>.

² CCD Comments on Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents Proposed Rule (Apr. 2, 2019), CCD Comments on Categorical Eligibility Proposed Rule (Sept. 23, 2019), CCD Comments on Standardization of State Heating and Cooling Standard Utility Allowances Proposed Rule (Dec. 2, 2019).