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December 8, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write regarding your recent guidance on implementation of the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program (P-EBT) pursuant to the *Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act*.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, we urge the Department to reconsider its decision to disallow U.S. territories from submitting plans to issue P-EBT benefits retroactively for school year 2019-2020.

The statutory language extending P-EBT benefits to all U.S. territories, regardless of their EBT infrastructure, does not exclude the retroactive issuance of benefits. The Department's decision to prohibit benefit issuance for the 2019-2020 school year for these territories when states were approved to do so is unconscionable given the severity of child hunger across the country, when as many as 17 million children did not have enough to eat this past summer.<sup>2</sup> These trends have persisted throughout the fall, with food insecurity rates continuing to be higher than at the peak of the Great Recession.<sup>3</sup>

We therefore urge you to immediately reverse your decision and allow all territories to issue P-EBT benefits for the 2019-2020 school year.

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 116-159.

<sup>2</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships*, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and> (last updated November 20, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Lauren Bauer, *Hungry at Thanksgiving: A Fall 2020 Update on Food Insecurity in the U.S.*, The Hamilton Project (Nov. 23, 2020), [https://www.hamiltonproject.org/blog/hungry\\_at\\_thanksgiving\\_a\\_fall\\_2020\\_update\\_on\\_food\\_insecurity\\_in\\_the\\_u.s.](https://www.hamiltonproject.org/blog/hungry_at_thanksgiving_a_fall_2020_update_on_food_insecurity_in_the_u.s.)

The Honorable Sonny Perdue

December 8, 2020

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If you have any questions, please contact Alison Hard with the House Committee on Education and Labor at [Alison.Hard@mail.house.gov](mailto:Alison.Hard@mail.house.gov). Please direct all official correspondence to the Committee's Clerk, Mariah Mowbray, at [Mariah.Mowbray@mail.house.gov](mailto:Mariah.Mowbray@mail.house.gov).

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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**GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN**

Chairman

Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary,  
and Secondary Education



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**ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT**

Chairman