

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND  
NEW YORK  
SENATOR  
RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
SUITE 478  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205  
202-224-4451

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

COMMITTEES:  
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May 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

Before the COVID-19 crisis began the [unemployment rate was at 3.5%](#)<sup>1</sup>, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was helping feed [38 million](#)<sup>2</sup> Americans, or 12 percent of the population, and during these unprecedented times, the need for SNAP has and will continue to significantly increase. SNAP and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are some of our country's most vital social safety net programs to reduce hunger, address malnutrition, and poverty. More than [41 percent](#)<sup>3</sup> of SNAP recipients are in families with children, approximately 26 percent are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities, and more than 30 percent earned a paycheck.

While many erroneously believe that SNAP beneficiaries live in urban cities, the statistics demonstrate that these programs benefit Americans in all areas of the country. According to an analysis of recent census data, 22 percent of rural Kentucky families benefit from the SNAP program, and 12 percent of urban Kentucky families. While in New York 13 percent of rural families depend on SNAP, and 15 percent of those in metro areas. In fact, the top 19 counties in America that depend on SNAP are small town or rural counties, and includes four counties in Kentucky – Lee, Clay, Wolfe and [Owsley county](#)<sup>4</sup>, where 45% of the citizens depend on the SNAP program. New York's Bronx County is the 20<sup>th</sup> leading county, with SNAP need at 37% of the county.

This need will only grow as a result of widespread business closures and subsequent job loss during this pandemic. The recently passed *HEROES Act* provides a blueprint for what will be needed to address hunger in America for the months to come and I would urge you to include the following provisions in any consensus bill that is negotiated:

- Boost SNAP maximum benefits by 15 percent and tie to an economic indicator;
- Increase the minimum monthly SNAP benefit to \$30 per month;
- Extend the length of the Pandemic EBT Program through the summer and allow eligibility for children in daycare programs;
- Provide an additional \$1.1 billion in funding for the WIC nutritional supplements for pregnant women and small children including increasing the value of the WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV) from \$9 for children and \$11 for women per month to \$35 for both women and children;

- Waive time limit requirements for SNAP and prohibit funding for USDA to implement or finalize the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, Broad Based Categorical Eligibility, and Standard Utility Allowance rules;
- Direct USDA to allow the use of SNAP to purchase hot foods or hot products from authorized retail food stores;
- Provide additional funding to states for SNAP administration this fiscal year;
- Increase food aid to Puerto Rico

In addition to the nutritional benefit to children, elderly and disabled individuals, the investment in the SNAP program acts as a force multiplier in helping our economy. According to the [USDA Economic Research Service](#)<sup>5</sup>, “\$1 billion in new SNAP benefits would lead to an increase of \$1.54 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—54 percent above and beyond the new benefits”. An investment in SNAP is an investment in American health and economic well-being.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. I look forward to working with you to include these provisions in the next COVID package that the Senate will be considering, and to make sure every family that receives these benefits will be protected during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

1: Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of. “Bureau of Labor Statistics Data.” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020, [data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000).

2: NCHAKO, CATLIN. “A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets.” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 16 Mar. 2020, [www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#New\\_York](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#New_York)

3.U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2018, by Kathryn Cronquist. Project Officer, Jenny Genser White. Alexandria, VA, 2019.

4: FRAC, Food Research & Action Center. “Households Participating in SNAP by County, 2012-2016.” Home - Food Research & Action Center, 2016, [frac.org/snap-county-map/tables/snap-county-tab-2016.html](https://frac.org/snap-county-map/tables/snap-county-tab-2016.html)

5:Canning, Patrick, and Rosanna Morrison. “Quantifying the Impact of SNAP Benefits on the U.S. Economy and Jobs.” *USDA ERS - Quantifying the Impact of SNAP Benefits on the U.S. Economy and Jobs*, 2019, [www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-us-economy-and-jobs/](https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-us-economy-and-jobs/).