



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 2051

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

In response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak and its effect on people across the country, our national associations¹, our national associations request additional flexibility in the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) to better allow us to serve customers in need. During the course of many natural disasters, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), which administers SNAP, provides a waiver so that SNAP beneficiaries can purchase hot prepared foods in addition to the other foods that these benefits cover.

¹ NACS is an international trade association representing the convenience store industry with more than 2,200 retail and 1,600 supplier companies as members, the majority of whom are based in the United States. SIGMA represents a diverse membership of approximately 260 independent chain retailers and marketers of motor fuel. NATSO currently represents approximately more than 3,000 travel plazas and truck stops nationwide, comprised of both national chains and small, independent locations. The National Retail Federation, the world’s largest retail trade association, passionately advocates for the people, brands, policies and ideas that help retail thrive. The National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant and foodservice industry, representing more than 15.6 million employees, nearly 10 percent of the nation’s workforce. With one million locations across the country, 90 percent of those being small businesses, the industry is a vital part of the U.S. economy.

On March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency in response to the impact of COVID-19 on public health and safety in all fifty States and the District of Columbia. Because this was declared a national emergency rather than a disaster, FNS does not have the same leeway that it often does to provide a waiver for the purchase of hot foods with SNAP.

Our customers need the flexibility to purchase hot foods with SNAP. We are already seeing store shelves go empty for periods of time due to the reactions to the current emergency. While overall there is no shortage of foods, the staples that many customers rely on are often not available when they visit their local store. These customers, particularly those trying to follow state and local guidance to minimize time spent in public, need the flexibility to purchase other foods – such as hot prepared foods – that may be available to them when they need them.

Our customers are also facing challenges with their normal food preparation routines. Children are home from schools and daycare in large numbers and for longer hours than has occurred in the past. At the same time, parents and other caregivers are pulled in many directions – some caring for ill loved ones, some ill themselves. Many of these families need the flexibility of providing hot prepared foods to keep their families healthy and fed during a very trying time.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to address this ongoing health crisis.

Sincerely,

National Association of Convenience Stores
National Restaurant Association
National Retail Federation
NATSO, Representing America's Travel Plazas and Truckstops
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives