



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

April 21, 2020

Secretary Teresa Miller
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Miller,

Re: Safe Food Purchasing Options for SNAP Recipients

As legislators, we understand the economic precariousness of our constituents since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreaks and that it has increased the need for people to access the SNAP benefits program to ensure food security. We understand the need for SNAP recipients to have safe access to groceries which would include access to online grocery shopping and delivery services. More than one-third of SNAP households include a family member who is an older adult or someone with a disability and many of these families rely on ride-sharing or public transportation options to go grocery shopping. Leaving their homes to make in-person payments or even using neighborhood volunteer-based buddy systems further increases the risk of contracting COVID-19 for an already at-risk population.

We support DHS in submitting a waiver that allows SNAP benefit users to complete online grocery orders (and allow for home delivery service) so that they may adhere to the COVID-19 response guidelines outlined by the state government.

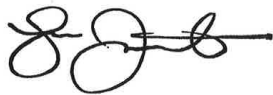
This waiver will be a good start to supporting our most vulnerable population. Additionally, we encourage you to look ahead to broadening the options and abilities for using and accepting SNAP benefits. From across the Commonwealth, we hear concerns about the safety and security of local food growers and producers who keep our food supply safe and steady and the financial security of these industries that are considered essential. Many local farms and producers have relied on sales to schools and restaurants and are now relying very heavily on direct-to-customer sales. As the increased demand for SNAP benefits drives users to shop at national chain retailers that can afford the large initial investment in the EBT system, smaller locally owned stores are losing customers. By expeditiously expanding the grocery retailers who can accept SNAP payments to include locally-owned grocers, local farmers and producers, and farmers' markets and farm stands, we can provide a robust network of options for SNAP benefits users and at the same time bolster our local economies to ensure their longevities.

We know that addressing these serious challenges requires cooperation across departments. We are asking you to:

1. Promote the use and availability of mobile EBT processing equipment so payment can be accepted on delivery or curbside pickup. Retailers should be encouraged to acquire mobile EBT processing equipment to accept payment upon pickup or delivery. This should be included in recommendations for life-sustaining retailers to promote social distancing.
2. Expedite soliciting requests and approving grants that provide mobile EBT equipment to farmers markets and farm stands.
3. Support legislative efforts to help offset delivery costs and help facilitate these reimbursements to vendors if passed. Because SNAP benefits cannot pay for delivery fees and because SNAP households are often too low-income to afford delivery fees, retailers should be reimbursed for delivery costs to SNAP households.
4. Submit an application to USDA to join the online SNAP Purchasing Pilot promptly so that retailers who can offer this service do so as soon as possible. The application should also state that:
 - a. DHS will develop a transparent option for retailers or groups of retailers who share an online purchasing platform to be able to join the pilot in the future.
 - b. DHS plans to work with the PA Department of Agriculture to help facilitate a shared online purchasing platform for PA producers and growers to accept EBT payments online.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and your service at this challenging time.

Sincerely,




Sara Innamorato
State Representative
21st Legislative District



Dan Miller
State Representative
42nd Legislative District



Dan B. Frankel
State Representative
23rd Legislative District



Joanna E. McClinton
House Democratic Caucus
Chair
191st Legislative District



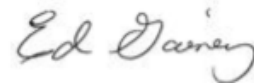
Melissa Shusterman
State Representative
157th Legislative District



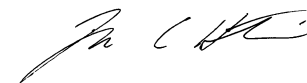
Austin Davis
State Representative
35th Legislative District



Jordan Harris
House Democratic Whip
186th Legislative District



Ed Gainey
State Representative
24th Legislative District



Joseph Hohenstein
State Representative
177th Legislative District



Kyle Mullins
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112th Legislative District



Mike Schlossberg
State Representative
132nd Legislative District



Stephen Kinsey
State Representative
201st Legislative District



Margo L. Davidson
State Representative
164th Legislative District



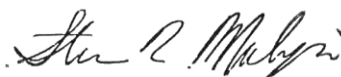
Jared Solomon
State Representative
202nd Legislative District



Harry Readshaw
State Representative
36th Legislative District



Danielle Friel Otten
State Representative
155th Legislative District

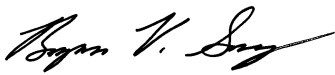


Steven Malagari
State Representative
53rd Legislative District

Adam Ravenstahl
Adam Ravenstahl
State Representative
20th Legislative District



Steve McCarter
State Representative
154th Legislative District



Ben Sanchez
State Representative
153rd Legislative District



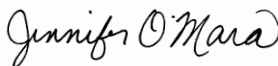
Mike Zabel
State Representative
163rd Legislative District



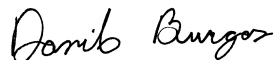
Mark Rozzi
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Jennifer O'Mara
State Representative
165th Legislative District



Danilo Burgos
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197th Legislative District



Matthew Bradford
House Democratic
Appropriations Chair
70th Legislative District



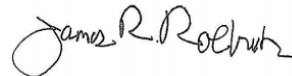
Mike Sturla
House Democratic Policy
Chair
96th Legislative District



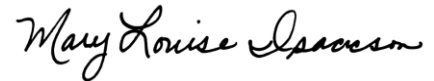
William C. Kortz
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140th Legislative District



James Roebuck
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Mary Louise Isaacson
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175th Legislative District



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G. Roni Green
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115th Legislative District



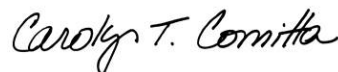
Wendy Ullman
State Representative
143rd Legislative District



Liz Hanbidge
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Elizabeth Fiedler
State Representative
184th Legislative District



Carolyn Comitta
State Representative
156th Legislative District



Dan Deasy
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