



August 26, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Economic hardship and staggering unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic threaten the food security of students across the nation. It is estimated that the number of children who do not have enough to eat could increase from [11.2 million to 18 million](#)—or to one in four. Schools play a critical role in ensuring that young people do not go hungry. Districts urgently need additional flexibility and funding so they can continue providing expanded meal service during the 2020-21 school year.

**As a bipartisan network of state and district education leaders who oversee systems that collectively serve more than 7 million students, we ask the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to immediately extend the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option through June 30, 2021. We also ask that you extend waivers related to non-congregate meal service, parent/guardian pick-up, area eligibility, and meal-time restrictions through the end of the school year. In addition, we implore you to work with Congress to secure additional funding for school nutrition services.**

Amid the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, schools require continued flexibility to feed students when operating on modified schedules or in non-traditional settings. Extending the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option, with the necessary waivers, is the most effective way to ensure meals are consistently and safely delivered during the pandemic. The alternative—quickly enrolling the millions of newly eligible students in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, which operate during the academic year—would present tremendous logistical obstacles in verifying eligibility and collecting payments, and could put both students and staff at increased risk of contracting the virus.

In this uncertain time, students should not have to worry about where they will get their next meal. Anything less than a comprehensive solution that provides districts with the flexibility they need could lead to severe and even life-threatening hunger for America's children.

We appreciate the USDA's commitment to feeding students during the pandemic and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about how we can partner to remove barriers and ensure children have the meals they need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Magee', written in a cursive style.

Mike Magee  
CEO, Chiefs for Change



cc:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
The Honorable Bobby Scott  
The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
The Honorable Pat Roberts  
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow