

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 30, 2023

The Honorable G.T. Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, Chairwoman Stabenow, and Ranking Member Boozman,

As you continue your work drafting the 2024 Farm Bill, we encourage you to include the bipartisan, bicameral Hot Foods Act of 2023, H.R. 3519/S. 2258, which would remove the prohibition on purchasing hot, ready to eat foods with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Since its enactment 60 years ago, SNAP has prohibited the purchase of hot foods. While this restriction may have made sense in the 1970s, when most families were cooking their meals at home, it is no longer an accurate reflection of American families' dietary or lifestyle needs. Retailers are also evolving to match Americans' consumer habits, and have expanded their offerings to include more hot and prepared foods.

The hot foods prohibition means that SNAP customers can purchase cold or frozen items, but if retailers prepare or heat the same food items, they become ineligible for purchase under the program. In practical terms, a parent can purchase a frozen rotisserie chicken and spend over an hour cooking it but cannot purchase a hot rotisserie chicken to eat immediately at home.

Today, there are almost 42 million Americans in the SNAP program, over 500,000 of whom live in Kentucky, 2.8 million live in New York, and 5.2 million live in California.¹ Eighty percent of SNAP participants are children, seniors, or individuals with disabilities.² Allowing the purchase of cold foods, but not their hot equivalents, disenfranchises vulnerable Americans who often rely on SNAP benefits for access to critical nutrition. Some individuals with disabilities can face greater mobility challenges in cooking meals from scratch and would greatly benefit from being able to purchase a hot meal with their SNAP benefits.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Number of Persons Participating," September 8, 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Characteristics of SNAP Households: FY 2020 and Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Characteristics of SNAP Households," November 29, 2022, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/characteristics-snap-households-fy-2020-and-early-months-covid-19-pandemic-characteristics#:~:text=Four%20in%20five%20SNAP%20households,equal%20to%20the%20poverty%20line>

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During natural disasters, USDA's Food & Nutrition Service grants waivers to affected counties so that SNAP participants can use their benefits to purchase hot foods when they are unable to prepare food at home. Most recently, USDA granted such waivers to all five counties in Hawaii following the Maui wildfires in August³ and to 23 counties in Florida following Hurricane Idalia that hit the state with 125 mph winds at the end of August.⁴ Such waivers demonstrate that the restriction on hot foods is an unnecessary red tape for business owners, program administrators, and American families.

The Hot Foods Act has bipartisan support in Congress. Now is our opportunity to provide families the flexibility their lives demand and modernize the SNAP Program with a simple fix.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



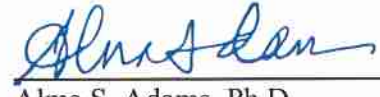
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Abigail Davis Spanberger
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Hawaii Disaster Nutrition Assistance," August 8, 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/hawaii-disaster-nutrition-assistance>

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Florida Disaster Nutrition Assistance," August 28, 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/florida-disaster-nutrition-assistance>

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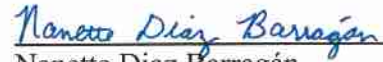
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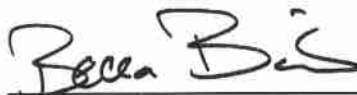
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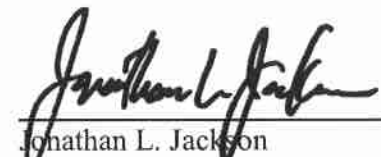

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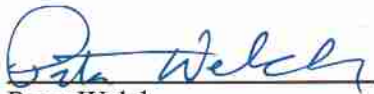

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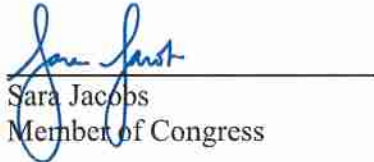
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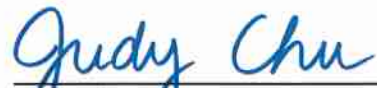
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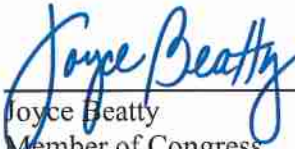
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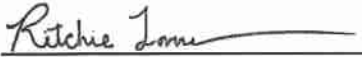
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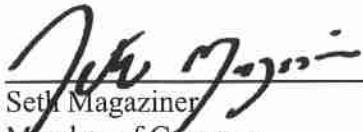
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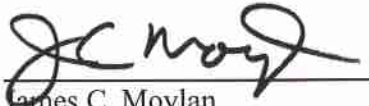


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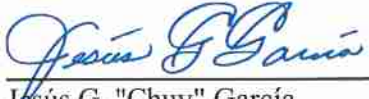
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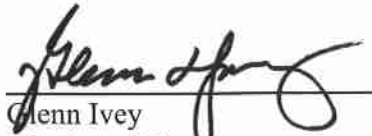


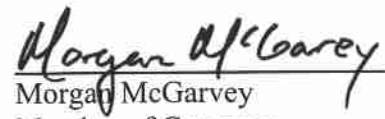
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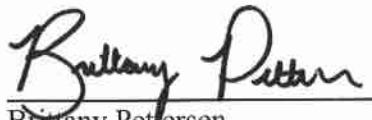



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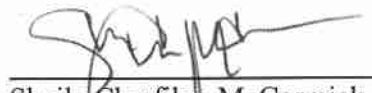

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