

## Advocacy Update 9.15.2020



- Government Shutdown Looms
- A Win for School Meal Waivers
- Farmers to Family is a Hot Topic

### Government Shutdown?

It is September, which means it's about time to start talking about another Government Shutdown. Congress must pass a stopgap spending bill to prevent a government shutdown on October 1, 2020 (about 2 weeks away). It is critical that this bill provide funding for the Department of Agriculture to prevent another "SNAP gap", like what was seen in early 2019 during the longest shut down in history.

[The House has passed 10 out of the 12 appropriations bills for 2021 \(see the table here\).](#)

However, the Senate has not passed nor addressed any of them. The best we can hope for is a continuing resolution (CR) to keep things going and buy Congress some time. Otherwise, furloughs and loss of programming would be disastrous.

**ACTION:** Call and ask to speak with the office of John Cornyn or Ted Cruz and let them know what a government shutdown would do to you and your community, encourage either a budget agreement or a CR. (202) 224-3121

### School Meal Waivers

At the end of September many critical school nutrition waivers are set to expire. Thank you to everyone who let the USDA know how critical these waivers were for children to get

nutritious foods. A special thanks to the North Texas Food Bank's Young Advocates who put a letter together to send to Undersecretary Lipps and Secretary Perdue. [See the letter here.](#)

The USDA announced that the child nutrition waivers will be extended until the end of the calendar year (December 31, 2020). We are grateful for this news but will continue to work to push the extension to cover the full school calendar year (June 30, 2021).

**ACTION:** [Please sign your organization onto this letter here.](#)

**\*\*NOTE\*\*** This letter is for **organizations** to sign-onto only, not for individuals, thank you!

## Anti-Hunger Concerned over Farmers to Family Food Boxes

### *These Boxes Sound Familiar!*

When the Farmers to Family Food Box Program was announced many were excited while also being deeply concerned. At its introduction, the program seemed to want to simply pay farmers for their products and get those products to people in need, as quickly as possible. But, for those of us who were involved with advocating for parts of the 2018 Farm Bill, we were deeply concerned that this idea sounded uncomfortably familiar.

As a backstory, during the 2018 Farm Bill negotiations, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue pushed hard for a "Harvest Box". This box would contain fresh meat, dairy, and produce items that would be delivered to Americans who were receiving SNAP. It also included a dramatic reduction to SNAP household benefits, and for some households an elimination of EBT totally.

This concept was defeated, in a bipartisan vote, as most anti-hunger advocates believe in client choice (allowing SNAP recipients to choose their own eligible groceries at supermarkets and food stores), infusing federal dollars into local retailers (SNAP benefits go directly from a benefit card into the local grocery market to support jobs and economic stability), and not adding additional waste to the food supply chain (producing and delivering cardboard boxes of food, that families may not even like).

Round 3 of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program awarded contracts only to distributors who can create a combination box of produce, dairy, meat, and fluid milk...and it looks eerily like a "Harvest Box". Anti-hunger advocates are worried two-fold. One for the logistical obstacles that will result from a multiple item box (food safety, weight & size, refrigeration, finding eligible contractors), and two because of the foreshadowed operational channel the USDA could be developing for an upcoming Harvest Box, aimed at reducing SNAP.

Are you or your organization concerned? [Email USDA here](#)

### *New Distributor Concerns*

The Farmers to Families Food Box (FFFB) Program operated on a model that allowed any charitable organization to obtain and distribute boxes of food, in a necessary effort to build a quick network to get needed food out as fast as possible. There have been quite a few new pantries and organizations across the Nation that have either quickly built or expanded their entire operations off this model. As the end of FFFB comes near, hunger advocates are concerned about the sustainability of those organizations. The loss of their operations will result in holes in service that will be left in certain communities.

A list of all the charitable organizations that have been receiving FFFB Program boxes would allow food banks and food pantries to proactively reach out to those organizations, as many are not receiving communication about the program's conclusion near the end of October.

However, these lists are only available from awardees, of which many did not keep records of recipients. NTFB will continue to advocate for flexibilities and a boost in SNAP benefits to meet this impending need.

## Last Day to Register to Vote!

...is October 5<sup>th</sup>! There's less than 3 weeks left to register to vote.

**ACTION:** Are you registered? [CHECK HERE](#)

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### Questions or Comments?

Did you know an acre of corn will give off 4,000 gallons of water per day in evaporation?

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