

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 18, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We are writing to highlight the problematic gap in service that has resulted from the USDA's initial round of Farmers to Families Food Box Program awards and which is disadvantaging Mainers facing food insecurity. At the outset of the program's implementation, USDA committed to assessing and addressing any regional gaps in the program and earlier this month, we were pleased that you said: "In the next phase, we're looking at those potential areas where we missed some geographical dispersion, and we're going to go back and deal with some applicants who were not successful." We urge you to rectify the shortcomings of the program's performance in Maine thus far.

No Maine distributors have been selected to participate in this program, and those out-of-state distributors who were awarded contracts to help meet the state's need were only able to provide an extremely limited number of boxes to Maine-based partners. As such, we urge you to provide all interested Maine distributors with another opportunity to apply to participate in the Farmers to Families Food Box program.

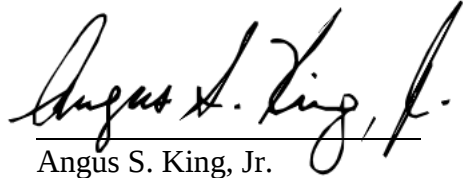
The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maine's families, farmers, and food systems have been serious and are certain to persist for months to come. Since the time that USDA began soliciting applications for distributors, Maine anti-hunger advocates and food supply stakeholders have developed a more complete understanding of the growing, unmet need across the state. Faced with increased hunger and equipped with a better grasp on what is required to address our state's significant needs, as well as what USDA is seeking from distributors, Maine deserves another opportunity to benefit from this program.

We look forward to working with you to improve food security in our state by ensuring that Maine families, farmers, and food systems are able to participate in the Farmers to Families Food Box Program.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
Member of Congress