

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 29, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write today in support of the Maine Department of Education's Child Nutrition Area Eligibility Waiver application and request for an extension. This request, which was submitted on May 7, 2020, is critical to maintaining children's access to meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Nutrition Service to continue providing much-needed flexibility throughout USDA's child nutrition programs so that a nutrition gap is not created by the absence of traditional school meals and summer activity programs.

As we wrote in March when encouraging expanded flexibility around the low-income area eligibility requirement for the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option, roughly 80,000 children in Maine rely on free and reduced-priced lunch programs during the school year. Allowing all meal sites to operate without barriers is critical to ensuring that no child goes hungry as a result of the pandemic. The current waiver importantly allows meal sites to serve free meals to children in all areas, rather than only those in areas where at least half of students receive free or reduced-price meals. Without an extension, however, the Maine Department of Education estimates that more than 60 percent of children currently receiving meals will lose access to this critical nutrition.

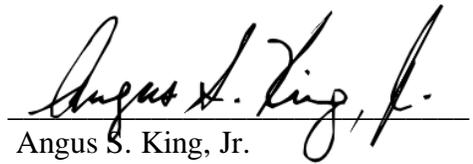
With summer quickly approaching, schools and organizations that operate summer meal sites—such as local YMCAs—are looking for answers and guidance about how to proceed, and the ability for many to operate summer meal service depends on this waiver being extended. We urge you to review promptly Maine's request. For your convenience, we have attached a copy of the waiver request submitted by the Maine Department of Education.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with the Department to prioritize the nutrition needs of children during this challenging time.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

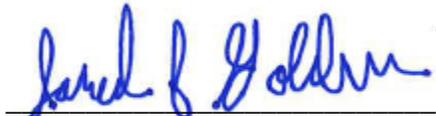


Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Jared Golden  
Member of Congress