Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you consider legislative priorities in any upcoming stimulus packages to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we urge you to incorporate provisions that will address the needs of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants. SNAP is one of our country’s most vital social safety nets, and it will continue to play a critical role in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty throughout the COVID-19 health crisis. In light of this significance, we urge you to incorporate provisions that will: (1) boost the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent; (2) increase the monthly minimum SNAP benefit from $16 to $30; and (3) place a hold on harmful rules proposed by the Executive Branch that weaken SNAP eligibility and benefits.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, a growing number of states are following guidance from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by encouraging social distancing and issuing stay-at-home orders. As a result, thousands of industries were interrupted, and millions of Americans were thrown into financial uncertainty. During this time of crisis, Americans must be able to turn to government benefits such as SNAP to put food on the table. In 2019, SNAP helped feed 38 million people across the country, but that number is likely to increase in the coming weeks and months, as a record-high 3.3 million people applied for unemployment benefits in just the last week.

The average SNAP benefit comes to approximately $1.40 per person per meal, and almost half of all SNAP families use up their entire benefit at the beginning of the month. At the height of the Great Recession in 2009, the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act helped prevent large increases in poverty by increasing the maximum SNAP benefit by 13.6 percent, totaling to $1.74 per person per meal. In order to mitigate the inevitable disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic will bring, Congress must make a similar investment, by increasing maximum benefits by at least 15 percent. To that same effect, increasing the monthly minimum
SNAP benefit from $16 to $30, will go a long way in helping single and family households keep food on the table.

Finally, Congress must also put a stop to harmful rules from the Executive Branch that will weaken SNAP eligibility and benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2019, October 2019, and December 2019 respectively, the Trump Administration published three rules that if enacted, will: (1) severely limit broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) and effectively throw hundreds of thousands of children off of school meal participation; (2) strip states of their much needed flexibility to set their own Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) using state-based and current energy cost information; and (3) eliminate state flexibility to waive certain work requirements and exemptions for SNAP participants who are able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). The BBCE and ABAWDs rules circumvent congressional intent as laid-out in the 2018 Farm Bill and short of rescinding them, all three rules, at the very least should be stayed until the economy shows significant improvement.

We thank you for your consideration and close attention to these urgent matters.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress
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Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb
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Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress
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Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress
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Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

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Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

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Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

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Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

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Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

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Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

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Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

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Norma Torres
Member of Congress

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Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

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Peter Welch
Member of Congress
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/s/ Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

/s/ John Lewis
Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

/s/ Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

/s/ Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/ Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

/s/ Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

/s/ Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/ Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

/s/ Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

/s/ William R. Keating
Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild
Member of Congress