

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write in support of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' (ODJFS) request to operate the Disaster Household Feeding Program, and to urge you to act swiftly on this request for the State of Ohio.

Ohioans are facing significant economic challenges as the country takes action to halt the spread of COVID-19. As more Ohioans lose work, emergency food providers in every part of the state are seeing a massive increase in demand for food assistance. According to ODJFS, as of March 26, 2020, the state has received more than 187,800 new claims in unemployment in a single week. During this time, many food banks reported a significant – greater than 50 percent – increase in clients, with roughly two-thirds of the total utilizing emergency food services for the first time.

Our emergency food system has not seen this kind of demand before. While we appreciate USDA's proactive issuance of waivers for some nutrition assistance programs and swift adoption of new authority for others, ODJFS requires more tools and additional flexibilities to meet increasing demand while keeping staff, volunteers, and clients safe.

ODJFS's request would apply to households using the foodbanks across the state during the period of the request, which is estimated to be 1,251,200, approximately 10.7 percent of Ohio's population. Approval of Ohio's Disaster Household Feeding Program will help protect the lives, safety and health of the citizens of Ohio and reduce the rapid spread of COVID-19.

We fully support ODJFS's request, and urge your prompt consideration. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Rob Portman
United States Senator

Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup, D.P.W.
Member of Congress

Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Troy Balderson
Member of Congress