

August 21, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

As schools across West Virginia prepare for the upcoming school year, I continue to do everything in my power to ensure the staff and students have all the resources they need to return safely and with as minimal disruption as possible. I write today to urge you to quickly process and approve the five recent waiver extension requests for Child Nutrition programming from the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition that were submitted on July 27, 2020. I appreciate the numerous flexibilities you have granted over the past five months to our school nutrition directors and those you have already provided for the 2020-2021 school year, and I look forward to working with you to also extend these summer programming flexibilities to ensure uninterrupted meal service for our children.

The current waivers for the following Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) are set to expire on August 31, 2020:

- Area Eligibility Waiver
- Meal Service During Unanticipated School Closures Waiver
- Meal Service Time Flexibility in Child Nutrition Programs Waiver
- Non-Congregate Feeding Waiver
- Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-Up Waiver

I fully support the State of West Virginia's request for an extension of the current waivers through the 2020-2021 school year to ensure these programs remain available to any school that might need to temporarily close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the very least, I encourage you to grant an immediate extension through September 8, 2020 when the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will be able to offset some of the costs of these essential services. Our school systems' budgets are already stretched thin as they work to secure enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies to provide a safe, clean environment for returning students and staff. They cannot afford another unexpected bill right now.

As you may recall, in West Virginia during a typical year, we have 200,000 children who qualify for free or reduced price school breakfast and lunch, many of whom this is their only reliable source of nutritious food. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an even greater need for our students and families who were struggling to make ends meet before the pandemic. With the flexibilities you have already provided, West Virginia Schools were able to serve around 11 million meals between March and May of this year and project that over 6.5 million meals will have been served through the SFSP.

I sincerely appreciate the waivers you have granted to date and the positive impact they have had on the people of West Virginia, and I look forward to continuing to work together in a bipartisan way to extend these five additional waivers to guarantee healthy, nutritious meals for our students and families in need. No child can learn on an empty stomach.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator