Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Roberts, and Ranking Member Stabenow;

As you consider the next COVID supplemental bill, we write to urge you to include the following hot food SNAP eligibility exception in the Senate package, which was included in the HEROES Act:

“During the period beginning 10 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on the termination date of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the term “food”, as defined in section 3 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 USC 2012), shall be deemed to exclude “hot foods or hot food products ready for immediate consumption other than those authorized pursuant to clauses (3), (4), (5), (7), (8), and (9) of this subsection,” for purposes of such Act, except that such exclusion is limited to retail food stores authorized to accept and redeem supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits as of the date of enactment of this Act.”

Prior to the COVID-19 public health crisis, 37 million Americans relied on SNAP benefits to buy food each month. Of the more than 37 million SNAP participants, nearly 70 percent are children, elderly, or have disabilities. The importance of this program cannot be understated: SNAP makes it possible for many of our constituents and neighbors to put food on their tables as they work toward financial stability. Unfortunately, in the midst of the crisis, over 17.8 million Americans are unemployed. No doubt, unemployment rates will continue to skyrocket.

Under normal circumstances, SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase hot food; however, allowing flexibility for the duration of the pandemic would ease the burden families face to provide nutritious foods for their families. Further, for essential employees who qualify for SNAP and are risking their lives to maintain their jobs, the ability to purchase hot food will ease the burden of having to cook full meals during this stressful time. These waivers have been requested by governors of both parties across the country.

While food supply chains have become more stable since March, we are still seeing disruptions in the canned goods, meat, cheese, and egg markets. We cannot predict the impact of the next waves of the pandemic or how those who are the hungriest among us will fare.

This is not the time to add additional burdens to those suffering; EBT benefits must meet the needs of the moment. We urge you to include hot food exceptions to SNAP into the next COVID supplemental package.
Sincerely,

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/ Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/ Dan Kildee
Member of Congress

/s/ Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/ C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Smith
Member of Congress

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

/s/ Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/ Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern
Member of Congress