

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
FINANCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3805

March 18, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As USDA works to address the effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) across the country and the significant threat to food security, I urge you to ensure that groceries can be delivered to SNAP participants who cannot safely leave their home to travel to a store. This is especially important for seniors, immunocompromised individuals, families who lack reliable transportation and individuals with disabilities. These individuals should not be disadvantaged simply because they rely on SNAP benefits for access to healthy food. I have heard from constituents unable to access grocery delivery using their SNAP benefits and urge USDA to immediately work with retailers and partners to address this gap.

USDA's SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot makes it possible for SNAP participants to purchase grocery deliveries, but its availability is limited to only a few states. While this streamlined option cannot be immediately made available to all states, I urge USDA to notify retailers of the flexibilities that do currently exist to make grocery delivery possible for all SNAP recipients who need it.

All retailers are able to offer online ordering, and this option must be made available for SNAP participants as well. It can be done by processing the EBT card either at the time of pickup from the store, or when the groceries are delivered to the SNAP participant. For retailers who have mobile device capabilities, swiping the card at drop-off would be the simplest option. If mobile devices are not available, the card could be obtained by the retailer or other partner prior to pick-up at the store and swiped upon pick-up at the store, prior to returning the card and the groceries to the card holder.

USDA has a direct line to the retailers who accept SNAP benefits and must ensure that they are encouraged to offer grocery delivery for SNAP participants. I also urge you to seek out private-public partnerships with these retailers, as you have recently done with companies to begin to help with rural school meal delivery.

Traveling to a grocery store during this crisis is simply not possible for many SNAP participants, including seniors, immunocompromised individuals, families who lack reliable transportation and individuals with disabilities. We must do everything we can to address these barriers by leveraging existing flexibilities and partnering with the retailers who have the ability to provide much needed grocery delivery services to all who need it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator