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March 12, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

While the State of West Virginia currently has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 coronavirus, I firmly believe that we can and we must take every possible precaution and do everything in our power to minimize the adverse impacts on our citizens. Specifically, I urge you to prioritize the approval of waivers for state Child Nutrition Offices to offer non-congregate feeding options should schools close in the event of exposure to the virus. In West Virginia alone, over 120,000 students are receiving both breakfast and lunch during the school day through direct certification, and over 80,000 more are receiving the same benefit due to community eligibility.

On Monday, March 9, the West Virginia Office of Child Nutrition submitted a Child Nutrition Program (CNP) State Waiver Request to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This waiver request would allow the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors to receive USDA reimbursement for meals provided in non-congregate locations. This commonsense step would provide essential food security to some of our most in need families and greatly reduce the potential for additional transmission of COVID-19 coronavirus.

The West Virginia Office of Child Nutrition was assured that they would receive a response in 24 to 48 hours, but, unfortunately, they continue to await a decision. I urge you to promptly review this request and do everything within your power to give local sponsors the flexibility they need to serve their communities in this unprecedented national crisis.

For your convenience, I have attached a copy of the waiver request submitted by the West Virginia Office of Child Nutrition. If you or your team have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Emma Bryan in my office via e-mail at Emma_Bryan@manchin.senate.gov or by phone at (202)-228-5517. I look forward to working with you to continue to provide healthy, nutritious meals to all our children.

Best Regards,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator