

May 18, 2020

Governor Kim Reynolds
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Director Kelly Garcia
Iowa Department of Human Services
Hoover State Office Building
1305 E Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

CC: Senator Jack Whitver
Majority Leader
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Senator Janet Petersen
Minority Leader
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Rep. Pat Grassley
Speaker of the House
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Rep. Todd Prichard
Minority Leader
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Re: Strengthen Food Assistance to respond to increasing levels of food insecurity

Dear Governor Reynolds, Lt. Governor Gregg, and Director Garcia,

We the undersigned organizations appreciate the actions Iowa has taken to increase access to Food Assistance during this time, but recognize that there is more work to be done. Many Iowans are struggling with hunger and food insecurity right now, some of them for the first time. At the same time, many businesses in our state are struggling. The Food Assistance program both provides food to Iowans in need and helps support Iowa's economy. Every \$1.00 in Food Assistance benefits is estimated to provide \$1.54 in economic impact to local economies. **We strongly urge your administration to take the following actions to strengthen the Food Assistance program and address an increased level of food insecurity in our state.**

Iowa should continue distributing Emergency Allotments to Food Assistance participants. The State of Iowa was granted a waiver by USDA FNS to issue Emergency Allotments (EA) to Food Assistance households in April and May, which increased benefits to the maximum monthly allotment for all program participants. Iowa should work with the USDA to issue additional waivers on a month-to-month basis and continue providing Emergency Allotments until the state-wide emergency declaration is lifted.

Iowa should waive ABAWD time-limits for the foreseeable future. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) temporarily suspends ABAWD time-limits for the duration of the national emergency. Economic impacts of the pandemic are likely to last beyond then,

and Iowa should waive ABAWD time-limits until the state unemployment rate has fallen back under 5%.

Iowa should expand income eligibility for the Food Assistance Program. Extending the income eligibility for the program to 200% FPL through broad-based categorical eligibility would allow more Iowans who are struggling to make ends meet access Food Assistance benefits.

Iowa should participate in the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). SNAP RMP would allow elderly, disabled, and homeless Iowans to redeem their Food Assistance benefits at participating restaurants. Furthermore, Iowa should petition the federal government to expand RMP program eligibility to everyone who receives Food Assistance benefits. Implementing RMP in Iowa would provide an economic boost to our state's restaurants while simultaneously providing food to Iowans in need.

Iowa should expand its investment in the Double-Up Food Bucks Program (DUFEB). The Double-Up Food Bucks Program provides matching funds for the purchase of locally grown fruits, vegetables, and nuts with Food Assistance benefits at farmers markets and grocery stores. DUFEB provides an additional economic boost to local growers and markets while connecting low-income Iowans with locally grown, nutritious food.

We appreciate the work the state has already done to respond to the rising level of food insecurity amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, but more action is required. The economic impact of this pandemic is likely to continue for some time, and it is important that the State take action to support struggling Iowans through smart public policy. Strengthening the Food Assistance program will both put food on the tables of hungry Iowans and help to boost Iowa's economy.

Sincerely,

Amani Community Services
Catholic Peace Ministry
Child & Family Policy Center
Clive Community Services
Coralville Community Food Pantry
Crisis Intervention & Advocacy Center
Crisis Intervention Service
Des Moines Area Religious Council
Domestic Violence Intervention Program
Eat Greater Des Moines
Episcopal Diocese of Iowa
Family Resources
Ft. Dodge Community Foundation and United Way
Good Samaritan Food Pantry (Adel)
Hunger Free Dallas County

Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Iowa Alliance of YMCAs
Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
Iowa Catholic Conference
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Iowa Coalition For Collective Change
Iowa Community Action Association
Iowa Conference United Church of Christ
Iowa Farmers Union
Iowa Federation of Labor AFL-CIO
Iowa Hunger Coalition
Iowa Interfaith Power & Light
Iowa Policy Project
Iowa State Education Association
The Johnston Partnership
Latinas Unidas por un Nuevo Amanecer
Lutheran Services in Iowa
Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation
Operation Threshold
Rape Victim Advocacy Program
RESULTS DSM
South Central Iowa Community Action Program
United Way of Central Iowa
United Way of Clinton County
United Way of East Central Iowa
United Way of the Great River Region
United Way of Johnson & Washington Counties
United Way of Muscatine
United Way of Siouxland
United Ways of Iowa
Urbandale Food Pantry
Waukee Area Christian Services
West Central Community Action