

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to support the State of New Hampshire's participation in the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for Children (Summer EBT).

As you know, the Summer EBT program is officially launching in summer 2024. In New Hampshire, there are approximately 39,000 children who would be eligible to receive assistance this summer through the Summer EBT program.¹ We are eager to see the State of New Hampshire participate in this program and are requesting the USDA's support to address any potential barriers within the agency's control to facilitate our state's participation.

The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program was a lifeline for many families, providing eligible children with temporary emergency nutrition benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 public health emergency ended, P-EBT benefits were no longer available. In recognition of the need to continue making nutritious foods available to children during the summer months, Congress established the Summer EBT program through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. Summer EBT will provide benefits to income-qualifying families with school-aged children to bolster their ability to buy groceries while their children are home over the summer months.

We have heard from New Hampshire families, food pantries and food security advocates that food insecurity is on the rise in New Hampshire. Recent survey data shows that over half (52 percent) of "New Hampshire children lived in households that reported having insufficient food."² In recent years, New Hampshire has lagged behind the rest of the nation in its participation in federal nutrition programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)³ and School Breakfast Program.⁴ It is critical that eligible Granite Staters do not miss the opportunity to access Summer EBT benefits this year. The Summer EBT program will be a critical tool in combatting child hunger in New Hampshire and helping families put food on the table during the summer – Granite Staters cannot afford to miss out on this resource.

Earlier this year, the State of New Hampshire expressed its intent to participate in the Summer EBT program in summer 2024. In advance of the February 15, 2024 deadline, the State of New

¹ https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-State-Fact-Sheets_NH.pdf

² <https://nhhungersolutions.org/data/>

³ <https://nhhungersolutions.org/our-partners/snap/>

⁴ [What do we know about school meals in New Hampshire? \(nhhungersolutions.org\)](https://nhhungersolutions.org/what-do-we-know-about-school-meals-in-new-hampshire/)

Hampshire submitted a Summer EBT management and administration plan for the USDA's approval, despite the state's initial concerns that the deadline to issue benefits may be difficult to meet given the nuances associated with rolling out a new program.

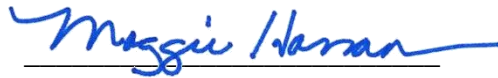
We appreciate the USDA's willingness to work with states, like New Hampshire, to establish a plan for the summer 2024 implementation of this program. The Summer EBT guidance provided by the USDA recognized that establishing a Summer EBT program may take time, and we were pleased to see the USDA's willingness to offer flexibility and "work with States to develop realistic and reasonable issuance schedules for 2024."⁵ As the USDA considers the State of New Hampshire's Summer EBT management and administration plan, we urge the agency to exercise maximum flexibility to make New Hampshire's participation workable. We hope this flexibility will include working with the State of New Hampshire to determine an issuance deadline for Summer EBT benefits that is feasible for New Hampshire.

Thank you for your efforts to bring the Summer EBT program to states across the country and for your attention to New Hampshire's specific needs as the State of New Hampshire prepares to launch a Summer EBT program in the coming months. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any questions or updates.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

⁵ [SEBT Technical Assistance Q and A for EBT Processors \(azureedge.us\)](https://www.azureedge.us)