

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Sent Electronically

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As you work to address previously unmet and newly emerging needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we respectfully request consideration to prioritize ensuring food security for low-income military families who face heightened challenges at this time.

While tens of millions of Americans regularly struggle with food insecurity, and many more households will newly encounter difficulty putting food on the table as a result of the devastating public health crisis, the challenges of food insecurity for junior enlisted military families are greatly exacerbated. As Congress considers much-needed actions to increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to respond to the general increases in need and to contribute to our national recovery effort, we should also correct a long-overlooked technical issue that has prevented low-income military families from qualifying for needed federal nutrition assistance.

This is neither an isolated problem, nor a novel one. Today, food pantries operate on or near every military base in the country. These pantries serve military families in need of charitable food assistance because they are ineligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits due to a technical barrier in the law. Specifically, under current law, a servicemember's Basic Allowance for Housing is counted as income for the purposes of determining SNAP benefits. As a result, low-income service members with dependents, especially those living in counties with a high cost of living, often do not qualify for the program despite needing assistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic is adding to the hardships that too many military families already face, including higher rates of unemployment and underemployment for military spouses (unemployment rates for military spouses were at 24% before the pandemic), more limited availability of affordable childcare, and school closures that may intensify difficulties for the numerous children from military families that receive free or reduced price school breakfast and lunch. Out-of-pocket expenses for relocation costs, to resolve substandard housing problems, and to pay for hospital bills if a family member falls ill are other timely and unique factors for military families. In addition, thousands of National Guard activations across the country will present economic challenges for additional households.

Data from the Blue Star Families Pain Points Poll conducted between March 18-22, 2020 reveals that military spouses are already losing jobs and/or working reduced hours as a result of the current crisis, adding to prevalent concerns about economic stability for a high percentage of military families.

We ask so much of our military families on a regular basis. At this time of national crisis, when service members face even greater challenges, we owe it to them to ensure that they can meet the basic needs of their families and do not have to worry about putting food on the table.

As you work to craft additional legislation to respond to our national needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the growing challenge of food insecurity, we respectfully request consideration of a provision to remove the barrier to accessing needed federal nutrition assistance for currently serving military families.

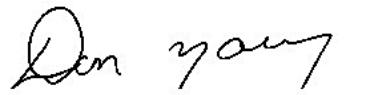
Military hunger and troop readiness go hand in hand. A simple provision to exclude the Basic Allowance for Housing as counted income for determining eligibility for federal nutrition assistance programs would ensure that service members are able to provide the basic needs for their family members, eliminate unnecessary stress and anxiety, and contribute to optimal mission readiness. Those who are willing to fight and die for our nation should never have to struggle to put food on the table for their families.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to address this issue.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress



Don Young  
Member of Congress

/s/ Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace E. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

/s/ Hon. Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/ Scott Peters  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

/s/ Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/ Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

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

/s/ David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

/s/ Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

/s/ Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

/s/ Dean Phillips  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

/s/ Salud O. Carbajal  
Member of Congress

/s/ Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jason Crow  
Member of Congress

/s/ Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/ Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

/s/ Deb Haaland  
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy

April 24, 2020

Page 4 of 4

/s/ G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

/s/ Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

/s/ Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jared Golden  
Member of Congress

/s/ Elissa Slotkin  
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Levin  
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

/s/ Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

/s/ Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

/s/ John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

/s/ Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Cc: House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson  
House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member K. Michael Conaway  
House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Chairman Sanford Bishop Jr.  
House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Ranking Member Jeff Fortenberry