

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write today to express our grave concerns about the distribution of contracts under the *Farmers to Families Food Box Program*. While we sincerely appreciate USDA's efforts to quickly provide relief to farmers and those without adequate access to food through the creation of the program, we are concerned that the Commonwealth of Virginia has received a disproportionately small share of food through this program under the contracts awarded to date.

Under contracts awarded by the program, it is our understanding that the Feeding America food bank network in Virginia is only expected to receive 2.3 million pounds of food relief. This quantity is far less than the amount that would be allocated if the program were administered under the same formula utilized by The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which distributes food relief proportional to each state's needs. Had aid been allocated under the TEFAP formula, we would expect Virginia to receive approximately 5.3 million pounds out of the 264 million pounds of product distributed in the first contract period.

We are also deeply concerned that only one food distributor in the state, DeLune Corp, was awarded a contract through the program in the first round of approvals. While we are grateful for the speed with which the first round of awards was distributed, we are concerned that Virginia is currently underserved by participating distributors. Food banks across Virginia have reported difficulty receiving aid through the program, especially in our rural communities, even as demand for food assistance continues to rise alongside growing unemployment, economic uncertainty, and the ongoing public health crisis.

Given these concerns, we ask that you provide answers to the following questions:

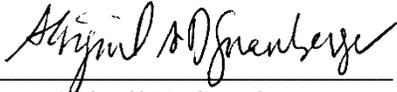
1. What formula did USDA use to decide how to allocate food under the *Farmers to Families Food Box Program*? Why did USDA choose not to utilize the existing need-based method used by the TEFAP Program?
2. In awarding the first round of contracts, what steps, if any, did USDA take to ensure that all geographic areas were serviced? Will USDA commit that when awarding future rounds of contracts, steps are taken to ensure that all geographic regions are served by the program and receive aid proportional to the region's need?

3. Before the first round of contracts, did USDA conduct any outreach to individual food banks or food bank networks to assess their needs, level of increased demand, or any other concerns they might have about the program's administration? Will USDA commit to conducting outreach to food banks to assess their needs ahead of any future rounds of funding?

We are truly grateful for the USDA's swift actions to set up the *Farmers to Families Food Box Program*. Like many regions, Virginia has seen dramatic increases in the number of those suffering from food insecurity. We believe that the *Farmers to Families Food Box Program* can be an essential lifeline for those who need it, and we stand ready to help ensure that this critical relief program is administered in a manner that is fair, equitable, and best reflects the needs of communities across the country.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Other members signing this letter:

Elaine G. Luria

A. Donald McEachin

Gerald E. Connolly

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Jennifer Wexton