

November 14, 2016

Re: Support for New Jersey Participation in USDA Pilot

Dear Mayor:

We need your help to help needy New Jersey families to more easily access Federal benefits. All you'll need to do is stop by the Mayors Information Center at the Conference, this week in Atlantic City, and sign onto a letter. Find the Mayors Information Center in the 2500 aisle of the Exhibit Hall. Here are the specifics.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) plans to launch a two-year pilot to enable Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to purchase their groceries online. Senator Cory Booker is leading a push to make our State a part of that pilot. We've put together a fact sheet on the SNAP pilot program, for further details.

Each day, thousands of New Jersey residents struggle to put healthy food on the table for their families. As of July 2016, there were 858,572 persons in New Jersey receiving SNAP benefits, which is approximately 10 percent of our state's population. A significant number of your constituents are dependent on these benefits to provide nutritious and affordable food for their children and families. According to the USDA, 524,000 individuals, or 6 percent of New Jersey's population, live in food deserts with in little access to healthy food options.

New Jersey is an ideal candidate to help the USDA test and improve the SNAP online transaction system, prior to expanding to the entire United States. Our state's unique range of urban, suburban, and rural communities, the state's demographic diversity, and New Jersey's established Electronic Benefit System make New Jersey well-equipped to support the USDA's pilot program.

For all of those reasons, we will ask USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to include the Garden State in the SNAP pilot. The more signatures of New Jersey Mayors attached to the letter, the more weight it will carry. Again, to sign on please stop by the Mayors Information Center in the 2500 aisle of the Exhibit hall during the Annual League Conference this week.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Michael J. Darcy, CAE

Executive Director