

Secretary Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20228

March 16, 2023

RE: Using SNAP benefits to cover shipping to rural Alaska

Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to urge the USDA to amend the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Online legislation to allow SNAP benefits to cover shipping costs to rural Alaskan villages.

Currently, the federal statute authorizing SNAP Online states that SNAP benefits cannot cover delivery costs for groceries purchased online. This is a reasonable policy almost everywhere in the United States, but it is a major issue in rural Alaska given the geographic and supply chain complexities that we face every day. Issues with the current legislation include:

- **Food security:** The current legislation is exacerbating food insecurity in many Alaskan villages. 51 villages off the Alaskan road system do not have a SNAP authorized grocery store in their community. SNAP participants in these villages often travel to a nearby village via airplane, ATV, or snowmachine to use their SNAP benefits—a major barrier for low-income households.
- **Nutrition:** In the 131 Alaskan villages off the road system that have a SNAP authorized grocery store in the community, the current legislation is harming overall nutrition. Rural Alaska grocery stores often have little to no fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, and other healthy food. SNAP participants in these villages are largely limited to non-perishable groceries because the SNAP Online legislation cannot cover shipping costs for online purchases.
- **Value for money:** Food prices in the most remote Alaskan villages are extremely high. SNAP participants in rural Alaska could buy far more food with their SNAP benefits if they could purchase from a grocery store in a nearby hub community and cover the shipping cost into their community. Unfortunately, this is not allowed under the SNAP Online legislation.

The current Farm Bill discussions are a timely opportunity to fix the SNAP Online legislation and ensure that it works for the unique logistical challenges of rural Alaska.

We request that you allow SNAP participants off the Alaska road system to cover shipping costs with their SNAP benefits. We are happy to provide a full list of villages or any other information you require.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Name

Title

Signature