

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2019

Brandon Lipps
Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Administrator Lipps:

We write today regarding the withdrawal of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) retailer eligibility for several retailers operating out of Baltimore's historic Lexington Market. We ask that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigate the situation at Lexington Market and assist Lexington Market and its retailers with concerns regarding SNAP eligibility. Additionally, we request an assessment of the impact that the withdrawal of retailer eligibility will have on SNAP recipients' ability to access the food they need.

Baltimore's Lexington Market has served as a public market since 1782. It is the oldest of its kind in the country and operates under a model nonexistent in other cities. The area in which Lexington Market operates is a historically low-income, food- and transportation-scarce area in which residents – many of whom already expend a higher proportion of their income to meet their basic needs – sometimes require nutrition assistance. Therefore, it is critical to have local retailers that provide healthy, accessible food for residents of the area – as well as the city as a whole – through the SNAP program.

A number of retailers that operate under the umbrella of Lexington Market have already been denied SNAP eligibility. It is also our understanding that additional retailers within the Market are undergoing review and that they may also be deemed ineligible. We ask that the USDA investigate the withdrawal of SNAP eligibility for retailers, assist them with concerns regarding eligibility, and conduct an assessment of the impact that the withdrawal of retailer eligibility will have on SNAP recipients' ability to access the food they need. In addition, we ask USDA to work with the Market and all its retailers, as well as the community, to help ensure that residents can use SNAP benefits in a meaningful and consistent manner.

It is also important to understand the impact of SNAP retailer withdrawals in food- and transportation-scarce neighborhoods. We urge you to consider coordinating with the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), which plays a leading role in federal research on food security in U.S. households and communities, in responding to this inquiry regarding the impact of the withdrawal on our constituent retailers and customers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request to engage with affected retailers at Lexington Market and to ensure that our constituents in Baltimore who receive SNAP benefits

have access to healthy food. Respectfully, we request that you respond to this letter by June 28, 2019. We look forward to hearing from you.

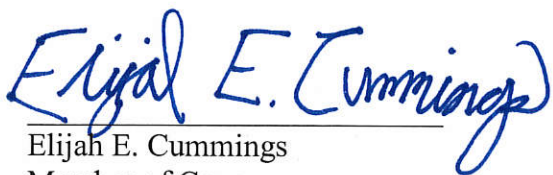
Sincerely,



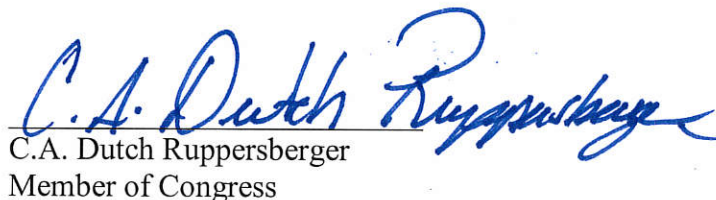
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

cc: Jessica Shahin
Associate Administrator
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250