



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

May 27, 2020

The Honorable Thom Tillis
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tillis:

Thank you for all you have done to support North Carolina in its fight against COVID-19. Today, I write to request your support to extend the Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) benefits for school children through the summer.

North Carolina was one of the first states to take advantage of the USDA's new PEBT program which provides a food benefit to the families of nearly 900,000 children who receive free and reduced lunch. This program has provided critical help feeding our state's children since our schools closed in March due to COVID-19. In total, this program will provide more than \$300 million to families to help buy food for their children.

Currently, states are not authorized to provide P-EBT benefits beyond the end of the state school year (June 12th in North Carolina). However, for families reeling from the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 emergency, the struggle to put food on the table will not end in mid-June. Summer programs that would normally provide ongoing summer nutrition for our children have been disrupted by COVID-19 and families have not budgeted for this abrupt change.

Extending P-EBT benefits through the summer would help provide the families of nearly half of North Carolina school children about \$250 in additional support per child, assuming two additional months of P-EBT benefits at the current benefit levels. This would bring more than \$200 million in critical help to families with school aged children throughout our state.

I urge you to support the extension of P-EBT benefits through the summer. A provision to extend the program is included in the Heroes Act passed by the House. I urge you to include this provision in any COVID-19 response packages under consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mandy K. Cohen".

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary