RESOLUTION

As the Federal government continues to provide financial assistance to mitigate the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is far more it must do to support individuals and households struggling with food insecurity, defined by the USDA as a lack of access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle.

Before the pandemic, there were approximately 40 million Americans who were food insecure, and as unemployment figures continue to soar and food pantries are receiving record-high numbers of new clients, millions more are food insecure today. The need for Federal food assistance is increasing at an alarming rate. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger estimates as many as 60 million people are now food insecure given unemployment rates and food bank data.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as food stamps, has proven to be one of the most effective Federal programs to mitigate hardships for low-income families. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), SNAP expenditures not only benefit food insecure families—these expenditures are also one of the most efficient methods to support an economy during a recession. Every SNAP dollar spent in the local economy contributes to the wages grocery workers and food producers depend upon to maintain operations. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that each SNAP dollar spent increases Gross Domestic Product by about $1.50 during a weak economy. As part of the next COVID-19 relief legislation, Congress must prioritize critical improvements to SNAP to help the most vulnerable among us meet their basic needs during this crisis and contribute to our national economic recovery. These improvements should include a 15% boost to the maximum SNAP benefit, and increasing the minimum SNAP benefit from $16 to $30 per month.

As households with seniors and immuno-compromised individuals are forced to self-quarantine during the pandemic, many individuals who are SNAP recipients cannot visit their grocery stores to purchase food. On April 28, 2020, the State of California rolled out a pilot program announcing Amazon and Walmart’s food delivery platform are now eligible for SNAP’s Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). While this major step increases accessibility for the millions of food insecure Californians who fear leaving the safety of home to go out and get groceries, the pilot program is limited in scope. Unfortunately, the program places the burden of delivery fees and purchase minimums on the backs of food insecure SNAP recipients. The Federal government must work expeditiously with states and businesses to waive delivery fees and bring more merchants into the SNAP online purchase program.

USDA must also expedite and streamline any and all waivers nationally to cut down on needless bureaucracy and reduce the administrative burdens on individual states to ensure that food assistance can be quickly made available to all in need during this crisis. The City of Los Angeles has a responsibility to serve its most vulnerable residents, including populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic who now face acute challenges of food insecurity and are in heightened need of assistance through SNAP at this time.

APR 29 2020
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that by the adoption of this Resolution, with the concurrence of the Mayor, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2019 and 2020 federal Legislative Program support for any legislation which would:

1. Urge Congress to follow the recommendations from anti-hunger advocates across the country and make critical improvements to SNAP, including boosting the maximum benefit by 15%; increasing the minimum benefit from $16 to $30 per month; and suspending rule changes to SNAP until the economy has fully recovered;
2. Implore USDA to prioritize the expedition of waivers to allow states to administer SNAP to anyone who needs assistance, and work to expand programs to allow EBT use on additional grocery delivery platforms benefiting local economies, and work with merchants to eliminate fees and minimum purchase requirements; and
3. Call on the Federal government to remove legislative and administrative barriers and increase access to SNAP for particularly vulnerable groups, including but not limited to: seniors, military families, Tribal Nations, college students, refugees and working families.

PRESENTED BY: "Bob Blumenfield"
COUNCILMEMBER, 3RD DISTRICT

SECONDED BY: "Maria Rodriguez"