



June 26, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leaders
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy:

I'm writing you today to bring light to a subject that's all too often hidden in the darkness — childhood hunger.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a catastrophic health and economic crisis in our country, pushing millions into poverty and hunger. But even before this pandemic hit, 1 in 7 kids faced hunger in our nation. Today, it could be 1 in 4.

Think about that for a moment. One out of every four children in our country could be living, right now, with the shame, the stigma and the weight of poverty and hunger. I know that feeling; I experienced it as a child.

My experience growing up without food is one of shame and desperation. It occupies every second of your day and leaves room for nothing else. There are no boundaries of what you will not do to get food--picking in trash, stealing, going to a friends house who has food. It suppresses your childhood and yet it's an easy fix.

These kids are waiting to be seen and to be valued. And the answer is right in front of you. We must make critical investments in federal nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In the best of times, SNAP benefits don't go far enough in helping families adequately feed their kids. That's why we need stronger benefits that can be used in more places. I hope you will use your position and influence to ensure that Congress:

- Increases maximum SNAP benefits by at least 15% and increases the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30 to help make ends meet during this unprecedented time of need. This is the minimum recommended by economists and leading food insecurity experts and service providers.
- Provides U.S. Department of Agriculture with the authority to expand eligibility for the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) to all SNAP households.



While it will take a combination of resources to help our nation's low-income families and children, one of the best ways to feed hungry kids during a pandemic is by making sure their families have the resources to feed themselves. That's the power of SNAP.

Every child should grow up to reach their full potential, regardless of a pandemic, a national economic crisis or the family they were born into. I hope you will give this urgent consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Viola Davis', written in a cursive style.

Viola Davis