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## **First Lady Wolf: Free School Meals Extended Throughout the School Year**

**Harrisburg, PA** – First Lady Frances Wolf is proud to recognize the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s [announcement](#) that allows schools to provide free meals to all students for the rest of the school year. These flexibilities, for which First Lady Wolf recently advocated alongside 17 other first partners and spouses, ensure that schools can continue to provide the meals despite the uncertainty and hardship caused by the pandemic.

“I am so glad that the USDA has taken this important step in guaranteeing that no child has to wonder where they might find their next meal,” said First Lady Wolf. “This forward-thinking provides much-needed certainty to families, school nutrition professionals, agricultural entities and community partners working to ensure that all children have access to nutritious meals as we continue to navigate a global health crisis and its subsequent economic effects. This is one piece of the puzzle for ensuring food security, and we look forward to continuing to work with USDA on the implementation of this and related efforts.”

These flexibilities, which have been extended through June 30, 2021, allow school feeding programs to avoid unnecessary barriers as they navigate health and safety concerns, staff limitations, technical restrictions, time constraints and more. From March through August of this year, Pennsylvania schools provided more than 25 million meals to children in need.

“With the USDA’s extension of the school feeding program waivers, students are promised access to nutritious food for the rest of the school year,” said Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “Throughout the COVID-19 mitigation response, these waivers have worked well for schools navigating many changes. Whether students are learning from home, at the school or a mix of both, these flexibilities will keep kids fed. Hungry kids can’t learn. Because of programs like this, no Pennsylvania student should go hungry.”

According to [recent projections](#) from [Feeding America](#), more than 54 million people, including 18 million children, may experience food insecurity this year, marking a 45

percent increase in general food security rates and a 65 percent increase in child food insecurity rates compared to pre-COVID-19 statistics.

In Pennsylvania, 2.04 million Pennsylvanians, including nearly 630,000 children, face food insecurity. This marks an increase of 45.2 percent to the general food security rate and a 57.6 percent increase to the child food insecurity rate when compared to 2018 statistics.

[In letters sent to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue and Congressional leadership on September 18, 2020](#), First Lady Wolf and the first spouses and partners of California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming encouraged both parties to work together to extend and fully fund the necessary school feeding program waivers throughout the remainder of the 2020-21 academic year.

Yesterday's action by the USDA comes at the heels of the passage of continuing resolution [HR 8337](#) by the United States House and Senate and its signing by President Trump on October 1, 2020. HR 8337, in addition to maintaining federal government funding through December 11, 2020, further extends the USDA's necessary nutrition authority and funding through September 20, 2021, for child nutrition programs, Pandemic EBT, Summer EBT for Children, Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and more. Further USDA action is needed to implement the extensions of these other programs.