

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Rollins and Secretary Kennedy,

Thank you for your leadership in advancing the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement and promoting healthier food choices for American families. As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to implement stronger nutrition standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), in close coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), we write to urge USDA and HHS to review the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), and pursue reforms to ensure the program aligns with the Trump administration's public health and nutrition goals.

Under federal law, SNAP benefits generally may be used for most foods and beverages intended for home consumption, but USDA places clear limits on certain items. Most notably, SNAP prohibits the purchase of foods that are "hot at the point of sale."¹ However, through the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977,² Congress created a narrow exception to this restriction by allowing states flexibility in how SNAP benefits could be used by those who lack access to storage or cooking facilities, specifically recipients who are 60 years of age or older, homeless, disabled, or a spouse of one of these groups. Today, this is known as RMP.

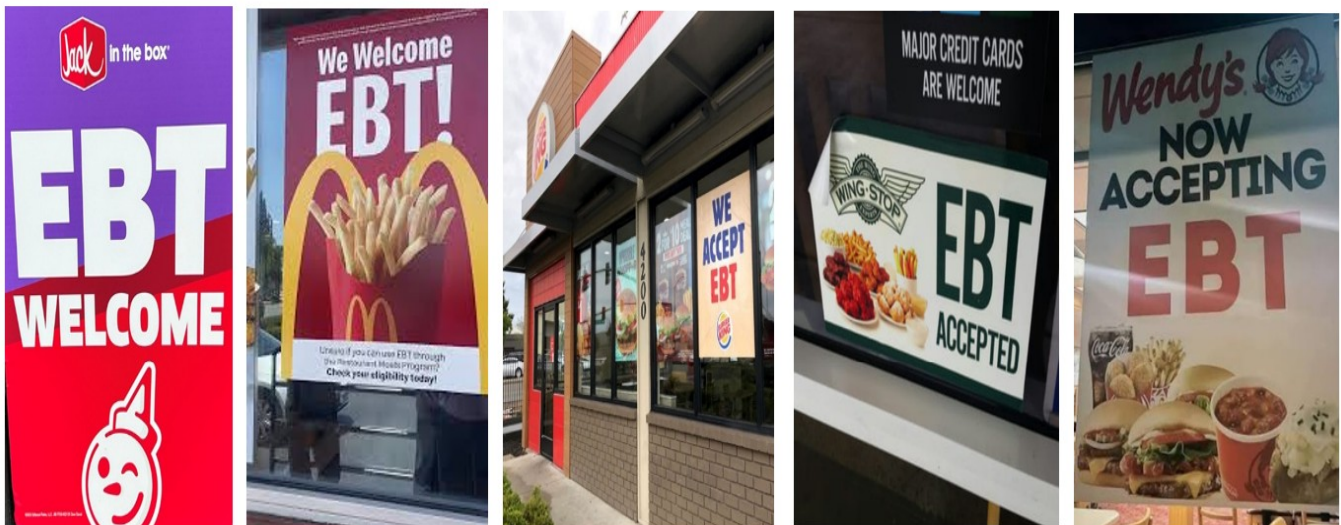
Historically, RMP participation was limited to a small number of restaurants within specific areas of need, and in many cases, the program was largely dormant. State participation declined from 19 states in 2003 to only four by 2018. Partially fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic, many state legislatures began revisiting the program to support the restaurant industry, leading to a rebound in geographic reach and a

¹ USDA FNS, "SNAP: Eligible Food Items," accessed Feb. 9, 2026, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>

² *Food and Agriculture Act of 1977*, Pub. L. No. 95-113 (1977).

dramatic expansion of participating establishments.³ In California, for example, RMP was previously limited to select counties,⁴ but has expanded statewide since 2019 and now includes more than 5,800 restaurants authorized to accept SNAP benefits.⁵ And today, nine states—California, Arizona, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia⁶—have opted into RMP, with other states, including Oregon⁷ and Colorado,⁸ taking steps to join.

What was originally intended as a narrow accommodation for individuals unable to store or prepare food, the program has grown and is now dominated by large national fast-food and quick-service chains. Examples of these chains include Jack in the Box, Domino's Pizza, Popeyes, Subway, McDonald's, Taco Bell, Del Taco, KFC, Wingstop, Burger King, Wendy's, Pizza Hut, El Pollo Loco, Carl's Jr., Dairy Queen, Denny's, Jamba Juice, Noodles & Company, Papa John's, Firehouse Subs, Baker's Drive Thru, and Yoshinoya.⁹ As shown below, a handful of advertisements prominently display the acceptance of SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.



³ John Bacon, “Federal Program Allows Some Americans to Use Food Stamps...” *USA Today*, Jan. 4, 2022.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/01/04/more-americans-can-use-food-stamps-restaurants-prepared-meals/9090824002/>

⁴ Joshua Stewart Miller, “Homeless, Elderly and Disabled People...,” *Orange County Register*, Jan. 30, 2018.

<https://www.ocregister.com/2018/01/30/homeless-elderly-and-disabled-people-in-orange-county-can-use-food-stamp-debit-cards-to-buy-hot-meals/>

⁵ California DSS, “CalFresh RMP Restaurant List (Dec. 2025),”

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CalFresh/RMP/Restaurant%20List%20as%20of%20December%202025.xlsx>

⁶ USDA FNS, “SNAP Restaurant Meals Program,” accessed Feb. 9, 2026, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/restaurant-meals-program>

⁷ Oregon DHS, “SNAP Restaurant Meals Program Pilot,” accessed Feb. 9, 2026,

https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/agency/pages/ssp-rmp.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

⁸ Colorado General Assembly, SB25-169 (2025), <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb25-169>

⁹ Mia Taylor, “A Complete List of Restaurants that accept EBT,” *Propel*, Feb. 4, 2026,

<https://www.propel.app/snap/restaurants-that-accept-ebt/>

The scale of growth warrants closer review. Data shared with our offices indicates more than \$524 million in SNAP benefits were spent at RMP-authorized restaurants across the nine participating states from June 2023 through May 2025.¹⁰

- California alone accounted for approximately \$475 million of this total,
- Followed by Arizona at \$41.4 million,
- New York at \$3.6 million,
- Michigan at \$1.3 million,
- Rhode Island at \$995,900,
- Massachusetts at \$649,000,
- Illinois at \$497,000,
- Virginia at \$308,500, and
- Maryland at \$8,600.

At the same time, the Trump administration has taken action to strengthen nutrition standards for SNAP-authorized retailers and improve access to healthier food choices.¹¹ As USDA and HHS continue advancing efforts to address diet-related chronic disease through the MAHA initiative, it is worth examining whether the current RMP structure reflects those same priorities. A program originally intended as a narrow accommodation for specific circumstances should not continue to increasingly direct federal nutrition dollars towards highly processed fast-food options.

We urge USDA and HHS to conduct a comprehensive RMP review and consider reforms to better align the program with the Administration's MAHA goals and taxpayers' interests, including:

- Review whether participating vendors should be limited to establishments offering healthy prepared food options and be subject to broader retail oversight, such as grocery stores, supermarkets, or similar retailers. This review should also evaluate whether participation by large national fast-food and quick-service chains aligns with SNAP's goals and original congressional intent.
- Facilitate periodic public reporting detailing:
 - The number of participating vendors and locations,
 - The number of participating beneficiaries, and
 - Annual program redemption totals and overall program costs.
- Assess whether meals offered by RMP participants align with federal dietary guidelines and improve nutrition outcomes among SNAP recipients.
- Review existing program integrity and enforcement mechanisms governing participating vendors and beneficiary eligibility to ensure the program is operating consistent with federal law.

¹⁰ Data table on file with sender.

¹¹ USDA, "USDA Requires SNAP Authorized Retailers to Carry More Real Food," *USDA*, May 7, 2026, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2026/05/07/usda-requires-snap-authorized-retailers-carry-more-real-food>

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Brandon Gill
Member of Congress



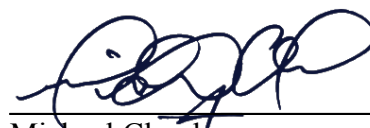
Ben Cline
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



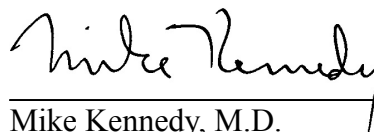
Beth Van Duyne
Member of Congress



Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



Randy Fine
Member of Congress



Mike Kennedy, M.D.
Member of Congress