

ROBERT J. WITTMAN

1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER, SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
SHIPBUILDING CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
PUBLIC HEALTH CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
RURAL BROADBAND CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2020

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2055 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4261

DISTRICT OFFICES:

STAFFORD OFFICE
95 DUNN DRIVE SUITE 201
STAFFORD, VA 22556
(540) 659-2734

MECHANICSVILLE OFFICE
6501 MECHANICSVILLE TURNPIKE SUITE 102
MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23111
(804) 730-6595

MIDDLE PENINSULA OFFICE
508 CHURCH LANE
P.O. Box 3106
TAPPANNOCK, VA 22560
(804) 443-0668

WWW.WITTMAN.HOUSE.GOV

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

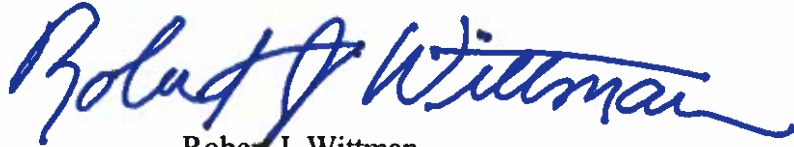
I appreciate the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service's (USDA-FNS) efforts to ensure children have access to nutritious food during the COVID-19 pandemic. I write on behalf of all students in Virginia's First Congressional District (VA-01) who depend on free and reduced school meal programs to ensure they receive meals throughout school closures and distance-learning programs related to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. I urge the USDA to extend the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) until January 1, 2021, for eligible school food authorities. The SFSP provides kids and teens in low-income areas much-needed free meals when students do not physically attend school.

In March, Governor Ralph Northam declared a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency for the Commonwealth of Virginia. In an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard the health of our students, teachers, staff, and administrators, all school districts stopped in-person instruction. Moreover, with most school districts in VA-01 opting for completely virtual-learning or a hybrid of virtual and in-person instruction it is critical that we ensure no student goes hungry or fears when and where they will get their next meal.

I applaud the USDA's spring decision to waive program requirements, including waiving the group setting meal requirement, to ensure states have the needed flexibility to safely administer school meal programs during COVID-19. I encourage the USDA to give full and fair consideration to extend the authority to the Commonwealth of Virginia to allow eligible school food authorities to serve students meals through the SFSP during COVID-19 related closures. The purpose of this program is to provide meals to low-income students that otherwise might not have access to proper nutrition. With the current SFSP program extension expiring in one month, schools face a pressing need that requires attention and action. I urge the USDA to extend this authority until January 1, 2021.

During this public health emergency, the last thing Virginia students need is to worry about when and where they are going to get their next meal. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to working with you to meet the needs of VA-01 students and families by providing the flexibility they need throughout this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress