

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1309

June 18, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) take rapid action to cease considering monthly Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as earned income when determining a military household's eligibility for USDA nutrition programs.

This action would be consistent with how BAH is treated by other federal agencies across the U.S. government. For example, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) exempts BAH from taxation, and does not consider this allowance as earned income when determining eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), or Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). Equally, the Department of Health and Human Services does not consider BAH when determining eligibility for the Head Start program, among other federal assistance programs.

By including BAH as earned income, far too many military families are cut off from USDA nutrition assistance programs. As a result, food pantries and food banks may often be found operating on or near military installations. In contrast, eligibility formulas for EITC, CTC, LIHTC, and Head Start treat BAH in a way that would allow these families to access USDA nutrition assistance. No military family should go hungry because of an antiquated bureaucratic formula that treats BAH as earned income.

On behalf of the thousands of military families who volunteered to serve this nation, we urge you to consider swift implementation of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator