

United States Senate

January 29, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write to request your administration take swift action to address the issue of food insecurity among military members and their families, which has only become more acute during this deadly global pandemic. Just as we have seen heartbreaking examples of increasing numbers Americans requiring nutrition assistance for the very first time over the past year, our Nation's military families have also needed more help to make sure they have enough to eat.

The officials you appointed to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should act quickly to cease considering monthly Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as earned income when determining a military household's eligibility for USDA nutritional programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This action would make USDA's treatment of BAH consistent with its treatment by other Federal agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service, which already exempts BAH from taxation and does not consider this allowance as earned income when determining eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

A [recent survey](#) by Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families demonstrated that nearly 40 percent of active duty families expressed a need for food and nutrition assistance. By including BAH as earned income, far too many military families are cut off from USDA nutrition assistance programs and must turn to their communities instead. This may explain why we already see food pantries and food banks operating on or near many military installations. Unfortunately, the Trump administration failed to fix these antiquated bureaucratic formula discrepancies that treat BAH as earned income for members of the U.S. Armed Forces, despite [bipartisan support for making this change](#). I strongly urge you to take action where the prior administration failed. Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator