

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 31, 2016

Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

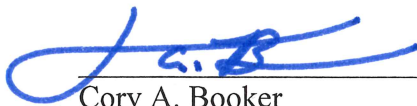
We strongly support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) plan to launch a two-year, nationwide pilot to enable Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to purchase their groceries online. As the USDA considers food retailers and states that would be best able to test online SNAP transactions, we write to request consideration of the state of New Jersey to be selected to take part in the pilot program.

As you know, too many New Jersey families are struggling to put healthy food on the table for their families. As of July 2016, there were 858,572 persons in New Jersey receiving SNAP benefits, which is approximately 10 percent of the population. New Jersey is home to a number of areas that are in need of additional opportunities for residents to access healthy and fresh foods. According to the USDA, 524,000 individuals, or 6 percent of New Jersey's population live in food deserts. Even more startling, a nationally respected community reinvestment organization, "The Reinvestment Fund," calculates that in 2013 New Jersey had 848,228 residents living in areas with limited access to supermarkets, comprising 10 percent of the state's total population.

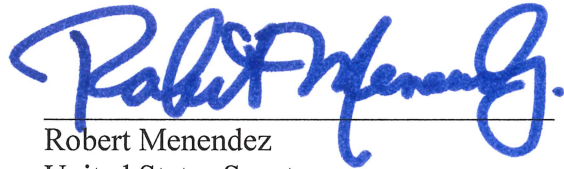
Given the large population of New Jerseyans that face barriers to accessing healthy, affordable food, New Jersey, in particular, would benefit tremendously from a program that allows new technology and innovative retailers to provide more healthy food options to those most in need. In addition, our state's diversity, mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities, and the state of New Jersey's Electronic Benefit System (EBT) that is well-equipped to support the pilot program, make New Jersey an ideal state to help the USDA test and improve the SNAP online transaction system prior to expanding to the entire United States.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue.

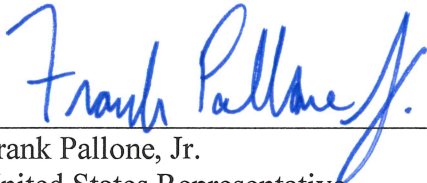
Sincerely,



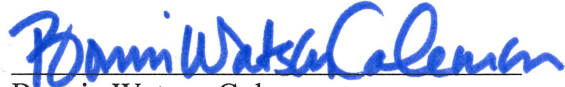
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



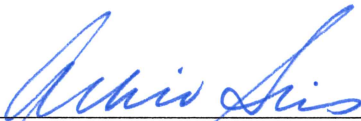
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



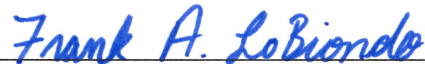
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
United States Representative



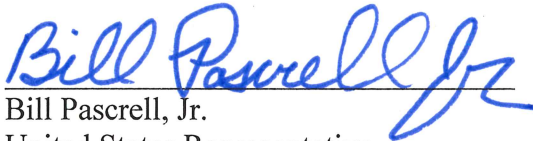
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
United States Representative



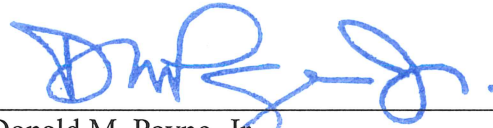
Albio Sires  
United States Representative



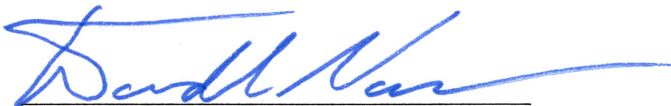
Frank LoBiondo  
United States Representative



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
United States Representative



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
United States Representative



Donald Norcross  
United States Representative