

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1806

April 10, 2020

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

The Honorable Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Governor Edwards and Administrator Gaynor,

As you are aware, food banks in Baton Rouge and other locations in Louisiana reportedly will run out of food possibly as early as this week. This is an emergency situation that requires swift action by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure mass care and feeding is provided to Louisiana citizens.

There is existing authority under the Stafford Act, recently activated by a presidential disaster declaration, that will allow the State of Louisiana, USDA, and FEMA to expeditiously intervene in this urgent matter.

President Trump's Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4484-DR) on March 24, 2020, authorizes Category B Emergency Protective Measures for the State of Louisiana, allowing the release of federal funds to address urgent conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Category B assistance specifically authorizes the provision of food, water and other essentials – and their transport.

In its guidance to the State, FEMA stated, "Under the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration described above, FEMA may provide assistance for emergency protective measures including, but not limited to, the following, if not funded by the HHS/CDC or other federal agency.

- Purchase and distribution of food, water, ice, medicine, and other consumable supplies, to include personal protective equipment and hazardous material suits"

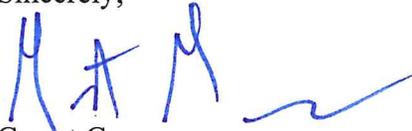
As you may know, Congress amended Section 309 of the Stafford Act to authorize FEMA to coordinate directly with food banks and hunger organizations to provide relief during emergencies and major disasters.

Therefore, we urge FEMA to act quickly in concert with the State of Louisiana to exercise all existing authority to address the food emergency in Louisiana, which can be accomplished merely by acquiring food or by providing financial resources to acquire food.

We urge you to use the same resolve and determination with respect to this authority as you demonstrated with Stafford Act Section 403 Essential Services authority to establish the Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power program.

We recognize that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has an important, necessary role in supporting food banks, food distribution and food security. We are likewise addressing these circumstances with the USDA by urging the department to exercise Stafford Act Section 301 waiver authority, among other powers, to immediately alleviate the food crisis in Louisiana. We also know that USDA has offered temporary relief in New Orleans. It is helpful, but not enough, which is why we are likewise working with the U.S. Department of Commerce to provide access to more than 20 million pounds of frozen, domestic shrimp and crab for food relief.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Graves', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Garret Graves
Member of Congress

CC: The Hon. Pam Miller,
Administrator, USDA Food and Nutrition Service