

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 21

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Resolution No. 21.

As amended by the committee, this resolution urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to authorize the permanent use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for the online purchasing of foods. The SNAP, which is federally regulated by the USDA, provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budgets of low-income families in order to purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency.

The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that the USDA conduct a pilot program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. In April 2019, New York became the first State to launch the pilot program. The USDA opened its pilot program for online grocery purchasing to New Jersey's SNAP participants, following the department's expedited efforts to introduce states into the pilot with the onset of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis, in March of 2020. Currently, individuals participating in New Jersey SNAP may purchase groceries online through Amazon and Instacart, and at participating Walmart, The Fresh Grocer, ALDI, BJ's Wholesale Club, Food Bazaar, Price Rite, Sam's Club, Sprouts Farmers Market, Stop & Shop, Super Foodtown, Wegmans, Weis Markets and ShopRite stores. According to the USDA, this pilot program is a two-year initiative.

Online purchasing of food supports those SNAP recipients who may be challenged with transportation or mobility issues, as well as those living in food deserts, ensuring that such individuals continue to have access to healthy and nutritious foods. Furthermore, the online purchasing of food has become a widespread practice among general consumers, and it is appropriate for the same service to be made available to SNAP recipients.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments revise the preamble to list all the retailers currently participating in the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot in New Jersey and to replace a reference to the expiration date of the program with information on the benefits of online grocery purchasing.