



Food and
Nutrition
Service

April 1, 2020

Braddock
Metro
Center

Walter Beesley
Maine Department of Education
Child Nutrition
136 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0136

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Braddock
Place
Alexandria
VA 22314

Dear Mr. Beesley,

This letter is in response to the Maine Department of Education's (MEDOE) waiver request to maintain children's access to meals during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, submitted March 26, 2020. MEDOE requests a waiver of the restrictions on site eligibility requirements in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Specifically, MEDOE requests to waive the requirement that open sites must be located in areas where at least 50 percent of National School Lunch Program participants are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Instead, MEDOE requests to locate meal distribution sites in areas that do not meet the 50 percent criteria to ensure that any child can receive the meals they normally would on a regular school day during unanticipated school closures related to COVID-19.

In its request, MEDOE asserts that it is not practicable or possible for some children to attend sites in area eligible locations, due to transportation barriers. MEDOE states that this waiver will maintain children's access to the SFSP meal service during school closures related to the pandemic. To maintain children's access to meals, and to support families experiencing financial hardship, MEDOE requests to waive the area eligibility requirements under 7 CFR 225.6(c)(2)(i)(G).

Pursuant to the waiver authority granted under Section 2102(b) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) (the Act) to approve waivers that may increase cost to the Federal Government and have the purpose of providing meals and meal supplements, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves this request. However, State agencies must have a plan for ensuring that new meal sites are targeting benefits to children in need, for example, children who may be newly eligible for benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. State agencies should work with local Program operators in developing their plans as local Program operators are best situated to determine how to provide these assurances. This approval applies to sites operating during temporary school closures related to COVID-19. Additionally, FNS reserves the right to withdraw this approval subject to availability of funding.

Mr. Walter Beesley

Page 2

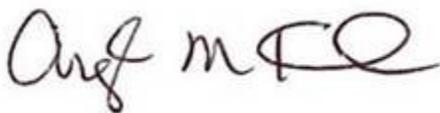
Therefore, effective as of March 26, 2020, this waiver allows SFSP sponsors in good standing to operate open sites in areas approved by MEDOE and consistent with the State plan, but that are not located in “*Areas in which poor economic conditions exist*” as defined at section 13(a)(1)(A) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) and as referenced in regulation at 7 CFR 225.2, 225.6(c)(2)(i)(G), 225.6(c)(3)(i)(B), 225.6(d)(1)(i), 225.14(c)(3), and 225.16(b)(4). This waiver remains in effect until June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. While MEDOE requests this waiver through September 30, 2020, FNS limited the duration of the waiver to assess its impact and the need for continued flexibility. FNS recognizes that there may be a continued need for this waiver, and will carefully assess the situation on an ongoing basis.

As required by this waiver approval, MEDOE must submit a report to the Secretary not later than 1 year after the date such State received the waiver. The report must include:

- A summary of the use of this waiver by the State agency and local Program operators,
- A summary of how new meal sites were targeted to benefits for children who were previously eligible or newly eligible for program benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, and
- A description of whether and how this waiver resulted in improved services to Program participants.

FNS appreciates MEDOE’s commitment to work with sponsors to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Northeast Regional Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Kline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Angela Kline
Director
Policy and Program Development Division

cc: Martine Cherry, NERO