

STATE WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Waiver Serial Number (if applicable):**
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.18(e)(1), 7 CFR 273.18 (e)(5)
4. **State:** Rhode Island
5. **Region:** Northeast
6. **Regulatory requirements:** 7 CFR 273.18(e)(1) indicates that state agencies must begin collection action on all claims unless they are not cost-effective. 7 CFR 273.18(e)(5) requires that claims become delinquent if not paid by the due date and a satisfactory arrangement has not been made.
7. **Proposed alternative procedures:**

Rhode Island is requesting to suspend all collection of active recoupment of SNAP overpayments and delay the collection action on new recoupments to allow SNAP recipients to temporarily receive their full benefit amount for a period of 3 months during this time of uncertainty with the option to request an extension. Households will still be liable for their outstanding debts; however, they will not be required to repay during this temporary waiver period and will not be considered delinquent for lack of payment by payment due dates already established via the repayment agreement. Households with newly identified overpayments will also be liable, but their collection will be postponed until after the three month waiver period.

8. **Justification for request:**

On January 31, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern as well as Health and Human Services Secretary, Alex M. Azar II, declared a public health emergency for the United States. The Governor of Rhode Island, Governor Gina Raimondo, declared a state of emergency of the entire state of Rhode Island on March 9, 2020, (Executive Order 2020-02) to protect the well-being of the citizens of Rhode Island from the dangerous effects of COVID-19. In addition to the state-declared state of emergency, on March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rhode Island is experiencing unique and unprecedented circumstances with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. RI DHS wants to ensure that our clients affected by COVID-19 can maintain their SNAP benefits without undue burden and wants to ensure as few barriers as possible to food access during this period of uncertainty. By suspending claim activities for a three month period, RI DHS will ensure that households have access to their full

SNAP benefit during a period of economic uncertainty and particular need for food access. Reducing SNAP benefits due to claims collection places an undue burden on households to obtain adequate access to food during this unexpected time.

9. Caseload information, including percent of caseload and description of population expected to be affected by this waiver:

Cases currently active on SNAP will temporarily receive their full benefit amount instead of having a reduced SNAP benefit due to overpayment recoupment. Cases that are closed from SNAP but still liable for overpayments will not be penalized or considered delinquent for missed payments. RI DHS will work with our technology team to implement a plan to suspend all overpayment collections in Bridges for a period of three months (with the option to extend upon FNS approval).

10. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:

This waiver will apply to all SNAP applicant and recipient households involved in recoupment or collection of payments. The number of SNAP recipients as of February 2020 was 145,353.

11. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed (please indicate if the waiver approval is needed to make system adjustments):

The State is requesting a 3-month waiver, from April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

12. Proposed quality control review procedures:

No special Quality Control (QC) procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases to which this waiver will be applied will be subject to the same standard QC procedures as all other SNAP cases pursuant to the FNS Handbook 310.

13. Name, title, and email of requesting official:

Name: Bethany Caputo

Title: SNAP Administrator

Email: Bethany.caputo@dhs.ri.gov

14. Date of request: March 30, 2020

15. State agency staff contact:

Name: Bethany Caputo

Title: SNAP Administrator

Email: Bethany.Caputo@dhs.ri.gov

Phone: (401) 309-1237

Signature:



Bethany Caputo, RI DHS SNAP Administrator

16. Regional Office contact person (*to be completed by FNS regional office*):