ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 216 STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 12, 2021

Sponsored by: Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE District 37 (Bergen) Assemblywoman AURA K. DUNN District 25 (Morris and Somerset) Assemblyman RAJ MUKHERJI District 33 (Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by: Assemblywoman McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Urges United States Department of Agriculture to authorize permanent use of SNAP benefits for online purchasing of foods.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/17/2021)

1 AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION urging the United States Department 2 of Agriculture to authorize permanently the use of Supplemental 3 Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for the online purchasing 4 of foods. 5 6 WHEREAS, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or 7 SNAP, provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of 8 low-income families in order to purchase healthy food and move 9 towards self-sufficiency; and 10 WHEREAS, This nationwide program is federally regulated by the 11 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) pursuant to the 12 "Food and Nutrition Act of 2008," Pub.L.110-246 (7 U.S.C. s.2011 et seq.); and 13 14 WHEREAS, The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that the USDA conduct a 15 pilot program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing 16 retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. In April 2019, New York became the first State to 17 18 launch the pilot program; and WHEREAS, The USDA opened its pilot program for online grocery 19 20 purchasing to New Jersey's SNAP participants, following the 21 department's expedited efforts to introduce states into the pilot with 22 the onset of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis, 23 in March 2020; and 24 WHEREAS, Currently, individuals participating in New Jersey SNAP 25 may purchase groceries online through Amazon, and at 26 participating Walmart, The Fresh Grocers, and ShopRite stores; and 27 WHEREAS, According to the USDA, this pilot program is a two-year initiative, as such it is slated to expire in April of 2021; and 28 29 WHEREAS, Enabling SNAP recipients to purchase foods online allows 30 them to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 31 social distancing guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID-19; 32 and 33 WHEREAS, Despite advances in COVID-19 vaccinations, precautions 34 to the virus such as social distancing are likely to be encouraged 35 beyond the expiration of the SNAP online purchasing pilot 36 program; and 37 WHEREAS, Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, online purchasing of food also supports those SNAP recipients who may be challenged 38 39 with transportation or mobility issues, ensuring that such 40 individuals continue to have access to healthy and nutritious foods; 41 and 42 WHEREAS, The online purchasing of food has become a widespread practice among general consumers, and it is appropriate for the 43 44 same service to be made available to SNAP recipients; and 45 WHEREAS, Purchasing groceries online is critical to providing safe 46 and vital access to healthy food for low-income households and is 47 necessary on a permanent basis to ensure an equity for SNAP

48 recipients; now, therefore,

s; now, therefore,

1 BE IT RESOLVED by the General Assembly of the State of New 2 Jersey: 3 4 The General Assembly of the State of New Jersey urges the 1. 5 United States Department of Agriculture to take immediate action to authorize permanently the use of Supplemental Nutrition 6 7 Assistance Program benefits for online purchasing of foods. 8 9 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, 10 shall be transmitted by the clerk of the General Assembly to the United States Secretary of Agriculture and every member of the 11 12 United States Congress elected from this State. 13 14 15 **STATEMENT** 16 17 This bill urges the United States Department of Agriculture to 18 authorize the permanent use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for the online purchasing of foods. The 19 20 SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of 21 low-income families in order to purchase healthy food and move 22 towards self-sufficiency and is federally regulated by the United 23 States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The General Assembly 24 deems that purchasing groceries online is critical to providing safe 25 and vital access to healthy food for low-income households and is 26 necessary on a permanent basis to ensure equity for SNAP 27 recipients. The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that the USDA conduct a pilot 28 29 program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail 30 food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. In 31 April 2019, New York became the first State to launch the pilot 32 program. The USDA opened its pilot program for online grocery purchasing to New Jersey's SNAP participants, following the 33 34 department's expedited efforts to introduce states into the pilot with 35 the onset of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis, in March of 2020. Individuals participating in New Jersey SNAP 36 37 purchase groceries online through Amazon, and at may 38 participating Walmart, The Fresh Grocers, and ShopRite stores. 39 According to the USDA, this pilot program is a two-year initiative; 40 as such, it is slated to expire in April of 2021. 41 Enabling SNAP recipients to purchase foods online has allowed 42 them to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 43 social distancing guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID-19. 44 Despite advances in COVID-19 vaccinations, precautions to the 45 virus such as social distancing are likely to be encouraged beyond 46 the expiration of the SNAP online purchasing pilot program. 47 Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, online purchasing of food 48 also supports those SNAP recipients who may be challenged with

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transportation or mobility issues, 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.