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**Congress of the United States**  
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LABOR, AND PENSIONS

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July 1, 2024

The Honorable Brian Kemp  
Governor, State of Georgia  
206 Washington Street  
Suite 203, State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Governor Kemp,

I am writing this letter to request more information regarding your decision to opt out of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer EBT program, also known as SUN Bucks, and encourage you to commit Georgia to participating in Summer of 2025 or as early as possible.

As you know, Summer EBT serves low-income families with school-aged children during the summer months. There are almost 1.2 million low-income children in our state who are eligible for this benefit but cannot participate due to the decision to opt out of the program<sup>1</sup>. During these months, children are the most vulnerable to food insecurity since schools are out of session and summer meal programs may not reach all children who are food insecure. These benefits provide \$40 per eligible child per month, totaling a combined \$120 dollars for the summer.

Summer EBT is a complement to summer meal programs through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO). While these programs are incredibly important, Summer EBT is a direct cash benefit to eligible families no matter where they reside in the state. This additional resource allows families to purchase food at grocery stores at their convenience, ensuring flexibility when a family eats and how their food is prepared.

For example, children in urban and suburban areas must eat on-site<sup>2</sup>. Meaning that to take advantage of these programs, a parent must take time off from work or other responsibilities to physically take their child to and from a site multiple times a day. Sites operate on different days of the week and at different times, meaning that a parent may have to drive to different sites depending on the time and day of the week. In rural communities, non-congregate meals-to-go will be served one day a week, meaning that if someone misses that window, they possibly miss out on meals for the week<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-State-Fact-Sheets\\_GA.pdf](https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-State-Fact-Sheets_GA.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunmeals>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sitefinder>

Last year, 59 counties in Georgia did not have a SFSP meal site, and some counties currently have no summer meal sites at all. Others are not expected to open until this month, weeks after children in Georgia's schools have been released for summer break<sup>4</sup>. Summer EBT can help ease this burden by allowing every family in all 159 counties across our state access to the flexible support they need when they need it.

As of the writing of this letter, Georgia has yet to notify USDA of their intention to operate the S-EBT program and submit a management and administrative plan for the program. 38 states along with various territories and tribes are currently participating or plan to participate in the program next summer, while Georgia's plan has not been made clear<sup>5</sup>.

I recognize that some states are not participating in S-EBT due to a variety of reasons, such as a lack of administrative funding or appropriate state agency infrastructure, but it has not been made clear as to why Georgia is not currently participating in the program or if you would consider operating the program next summer.

Participating in S-EBT is estimated to cost \$4.5 million dollars in administrative costs for the state, less than .1 percent of the \$16 Billion dollar surplus the Georgia General Reserve fund possessed at the end of last fiscal year<sup>6</sup>. Due to the 50 percent non-federal match requirement, USDA will provide the remaining funds needed to administer S-EBT – a program that in previous demonstrations has been shown to reduce very low food insecurity among children and improve nutritional outcomes<sup>7</sup>.

In January, your office stated that, "Georgia opted not to participate in the proposed EBT program and instead remains focused on well-established and effective programs that are tailored to address our state's specific needs by providing necessary nutrition and engagement to families and kids."<sup>8</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, there continue to be multiple well-documented barriers preventing Georgians from taking full advantage of summer meal programs.

While incredibly important, it is painfully obvious that the current available options are not meeting the needs of families in Georgia.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gpb.org/news/2024/06/04/georgias-opting-out-of-federal-food-program-summer-heres-whats-available-for-kids>

<sup>5</sup> [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/fighting\\_summer\\_hunger\\_pangs\\_how\\_summer\\_feeding\\_programs\\_bridge\\_the\\_nutrition\\_gap1.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/fighting_summer_hunger_pangs_how_summer_feeding_programs_bridge_the_nutrition_gap1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://gbpi.org/georgias-16-billion-question-will-the-state-equitably-invest-in-its-people/?\\_gl=1\\*\\_1m5tk6v\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*OTU5MTcyMTc4LjE3MTk0MDk2MDU.\\*\\_ga\\_ZWZC5HZ1YJ\\*MTcxOTQwOTYwNS4xLjAuMTcxOTQwOTYwNS4wLjAuMA](https://gbpi.org/georgias-16-billion-question-will-the-state-equitably-invest-in-its-people/?_gl=1*_1m5tk6v*_up*MQ..*_ga*OTU5MTcyMTc4LjE3MTk0MDk2MDU.*_ga_ZWZC5HZ1YJ*MTcxOTQwOTYwNS4xLjAuMTcxOTQwOTYwNS4wLjAuMA).

<sup>7</sup> <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/ops/sebtcfinalreport-summary.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/politics/georgia-opts-out-usda-summer-ebt-program-children-nutrition/85-58bff490-2941-46e9-80a7-a1176c632b68>

It is vital that it be made clear why Georgia is not participating in this program and that we work together to ensure that every family in our state, regardless of location, is able to put food on the table when school is out. States who refuse to participate in Summer EBT are needlessly putting children's access to food during the summer in jeopardy.

I am requesting an official response from your office to the following questions at your earliest convenience.

1. What is the specific reason why Georgia is not participating in Summer EBT despite overwhelming evidence that current summer feeding options are not sufficient to meet the needs of families in Georgia?
2. Are there any barriers to participating in Summer EBT that the state could use assistance in overcoming and have these barriers been communicated to USDA?
3. Have you considered using a small portion of Georgia's \$16 billion dollar budget surplus to cover the estimated \$4.5 million cost of administering the program?
4. Will you commit to ensuring that Georgia participates in USDA's Summer EBT program as soon as possible or at least in the Summer of 2025?

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucy McBath". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress