

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 19, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We request respectfully that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reconsider the reimbursement rates for Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, under in-school meal and child nutrition programs. Our territories are the only two outlying jurisdictions participating in the National School Lunch Program reimbursed at the continental United States rate.

At present, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico receive more favorable reimbursement rates under the national school lunch, breakfast, special milk, and afterschool snack programs. According to USDA, these reimbursement rates reflect higher costs of delivering in-school meals and child nutrition programs in those jurisdictions, among other factors. We agree, wholeheartedly, that *all* outlying jurisdictions facing higher costs should be reimbursed at higher rates than the mainland United States. Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands share the challenge of higher costs of living, fewer locally available resources, and greater percentages of schoolchildren from underserved households, than the mainland United States.

We appreciate that USDA has an established process whereby a state or territory may submit documentation seeking an increase in their reimbursement rate. However, it is our understanding that recent successful applications have only been submitted with the help of hired outside consultants, at considerable expense to the local department of education. The Guam Department of Education (GDOE) and the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) already struggle to meet the needs of our students, given local budgetary constraints. As such, hiring additional outside consultants remains cost prohibitive at this time.

Today, we introduced legislation in the House, the *Federal School Meals Parity Act* (H.R.6132), which seeks fair reimbursement for Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands under USDA's National School Lunch Program and other in-school meal and child nutrition programs. While we continue working in Congress to ensure parity for Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, we hope that you will reevaluate our territories' current reimbursement rates and make the necessary adjustments that more adequately reflects the costs in our jurisdictions. Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO  
Member of Congress

  
STACEY E. PLASKETT  
Member of Congress