

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture Designate
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary-designate Vilsack:

We write to ensure your awareness of significant problems with the implementation of recent rounds of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program (F2F) under the Trump administration and ask for your assistance in resolving the issues we have identified in Vermont.

Global Trading Enterprises, LLC, the vendor selected to implement the current round of F2F in Vermont, submitted a bid that is seemingly too low for them to deliver food boxes to the areas promised under the contract. As a result, they are failing to meet the needs of hungry Vermonters, falling back on an insufficient plan, which is delivering boxes to only seven locations in the entirety of our rural state, in just five of the state's 14 counties. This will leave nearly 250 towns, and hundreds Vermont families, without the food assistance they were promised under this federal program.

Despite Vermont having a well-established network for the F2F program, Global Trading Enterprises is not utilizing these resources and has failed to communicate even the most basic information to the State of Vermont or Vermont Foodbank. Our offices learned this week that Global Trading Enterprises told one local food shelf leader she would need to drive to the next county and wait in line for hours, just for the possibility of receiving boxes when the delivery truck arrived. We are sure you will agree that this is a complete failure on the part of the vendor, which is required under their contract with USDA to provide last mile delivery.

We appreciate your efforts to address serious food safety concerns and mitigate the impact of the distribution problems highlighted above. We further ask that you thoroughly investigate all violations to this point and open the contract for rebidding for March and April. In selecting a bidder, we ask that USDA take into account past performance of vendors and prioritize those with a proven track record of successful implementation of the program and those with existing local partnerships and distribution networks.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter as we work to ensure that the Farmers to Families Food Box Program is successfully implemented to provide nutrition and food assistance to those in need in Vermont and all across our country.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Congressman