



**United States Department of Agriculture**

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

**OCT 17 2017**

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo  
Governor of Rhode Island  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Governor Raimondo:

This letter is to inform you that Rhode Island is among the States with the highest Program Access Index (PAI) for calendar year (CY) 2016. Rhode Island's CY 2016 PAI was 99.94 percent. Rhode Island is also among the States with the most improved PAI, from 94.99 percent in CY 2015 to 99.94 percent in CY 2016. In accordance with regulations, if a State is determined to be among the highest and the most improved in a category, it will be awarded a bonus for only the highest. Therefore, Rhode Island is eligible to receive a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) high performance bonus award of \$725,159 for highest PAI. However, due to ongoing issues with SNAP operations in the State, we are delaying payment of the bonus pending final determinations about any claims owed.

As you are aware, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is currently working with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) on issues related to the implementation of its new integrated eligibility system, including the possibility that a significant number of cases were extended without the processing of recertification applications. FNS and DHS are still in the process of determining the extent of the problem. It is anticipated that a claim may be established in the near future for the inappropriate extensions as well as other overpayments resulting from system issues. Pending resolution of this potential claim, FNS is delaying payment of the high performance bonus. If a claim is ultimately established, the bonus money would be used to offset the claim. In the event any money remains after such an offset, the balance would be provided to Rhode Island.

The PAI is the number of SNAP participants, as reported by the State that are divided by the estimated number of eligible participants. The number of SNAP eligible people in the State is only an estimate derived using Census data, which is based on 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and does not conform exactly to SNAP eligibility requirements. Therefore, occasionally the resulting PAI may be greater than 100 percent. It does not imply more than the number of eligible participants are receiving SNAP benefits.

Section 4021 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 requires high performance bonus funds to be used only for SNAP-related expenses, such as: investments in technology; improvements in administration and distribution; and actions to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. I encourage States that receive such bonuses to use these funds to improve program administration, particularly in the area of program integrity. Reinvesting high performance bonus funds for

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integrity initiatives provides a return on a valuable investment and supports our efforts in ensuring that SNAP is run efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost integrity.

We will continue to work with Rhode Island to address these concerns that are impacting vital nutrition assistance for the people of the State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Lipps". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brandon Lipps  
Acting Deputy Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services