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March 9, 2016

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room  
200-A  
Washington, DC 20250

Kevin W. Concannon  
Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services  
Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room  
216-E  
Washington, DC 20250-0106

**RE: Request for Extension – Enhancing Retailer Standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, RIN 0584-AE27**

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Undersecretary Concannon,

On behalf of our client, the National Association of Convenience Stores (“NACS”), we respectfully request a 60-day extension of the comment period for the Food and Nutrition Service’s (“FNS’s”) proposed rule (RIN 0584-AE27) to amend retailer eligibility standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”).

NACS is an international trade association with more than 2,200 retail and 1,800 supplier companies as members. NACS members operate stores across the United States, which are important fixtures in rural, urban, and suburban communities—and essential participants in SNAP. The convenience store industry is an industry of small businesses. Approximately 63.0% of stores are single-store operators; and 75% of NACS members operate 10 stores or less.

Since enactment of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the “Farm Bill”), FNS spent approximately two years developing its proposal to revise SNAP retailer eligibility requirements. Given FNS’ lengthy process leading up to this highly technical rulemaking, NACS requests the agency to afford stakeholders with a similar opportunity to provide input. NACS undertakes a lengthy and methodical process in order to solicit comments from its members. This process results in comments that provide federal agencies with detailed and useful information, rather than simple argument without details. The current comment deadline will force NACS to truncate this process, which thereby will make it impossible for NACS to prepare complete and thorough comments.

Specifically, in order to provide FNS with detailed and meaningful comments, NACS has initiated a survey of its membership to determine how the various requirements proposed in the rule would affect the ability of its members to participate in SNAP. Unsurprising given the

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highly technical nature of this rulemaking, the survey is quite comprehensive and time consuming. While a handful of members have been able to respond as of the date of this letter, the vast majority – including many single-store operators – have not yet been able to respond.<sup>1</sup> This is not unexpected. Those smaller members face significant administrative obstacles that render the process of gathering survey response data difficult and slow-going.

Only after NACS receives responses to the survey will it be able to analyze how the rule will impact its members. Therefore, NACS needs time to have its members complete this survey and time to subsequently analyze that data in order to provide thorough, detailed, and accurate comments to FNS. **In light of this, NACS respectfully requests that FNS extend the comment period for this rulemaking for an additional 60 days.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



R. Timothy Columbus  
Eva V. Rigamonti  
Counsel to the National Association of Convenience Stores

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<sup>1</sup> Many of these members have, however, informed NACS that they are in the process of gathering data in order to respond to the survey.