



January 11, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
Presidential Transition Office  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

On behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA) and its more than 40 million volunteers and supporters, we thank you for the opportunity to share more information about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our federal policy priorities to meet the needs of affected individuals, families, and communities. As the pandemic surges, much more must be done to strengthen and expand [access to care](#), [public health infrastructure](#), [child nutrition](#), [food security](#), [active transportation](#), and [research](#).

Without question, the new

x communities.

[Research studies](#) of the AHA's new [COVID-19 Cardiovascular Disease Registry](#) released last month.





patient access to critical CR/PR and help address many health behavioral and

must be strengthened to ensure health equity; any disparities by race, sex and/or gender, disability status, health insurance status, citizenship status and geographic location in the delivery and availability of, and accessibility to COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must be anticipated and planned for and mitigated to assure equity. Moreover, we strongly encourage a unified effort to strengthen vaccine confidence and combating mi



should also work with the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to explore options to make universal school meals permanent. Providing meals at no cost for all enrolled students will help program finances as they recover from losses from the pandemic, and mitigate the time and

#### IV. Food Security

SNAP has proven to be an important safety net during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the current SNAP benefit— even at emergency levels— is woefully inadequate, and the Trump administration sought policies to make it more difficult to access SNAP. As the Biden administration explores options for fiscal recovery, the data show that SNAP is also an effective stimulus, generating between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in local economic activity during a recession. The Biden administration should take definitive action to strengthen and protect SNAP, including:

- Working with the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to extend the 15 percent benefit increase beyond June 30, 2021. This increase is needed to offset the significant loss in income and soaring unemployment resulting from COVID-19-related closures and disruptions. An increase in SNAP can also help stimulate the economy.
- Improving benefit adequacy by allowing states to provide additional emergency allotments to households. The USDA narrowly interpreted the FFCRA’s guidance on SNAP maximum emergency allotments, leaving out the poorest 40 percent of participants who already receive the maximum benefit. As the Act permits, The USDA should allow states to provide an additional allotment to all households up to the maximum amount.
- Issuing a moratorium and halt the rulemaking process on





that lawmakers balance competing priorities and provide adequate resources to not only address the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic, but also build on investments in life-saving cardiovascular disease research.

Supporting the biomedical research enterprise is more important than ever for learning from this pandemic, creating science-based clinical guidelines and robust systems of care, understanding the epidemiology of infectious