



## Alaska Food Policy Council

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4/18/2024

RE: Support of companion bill to S. 2563, the Tribal Access to Nutrition Assistance Act (Act)

Dear Samuel,

On behalf of the [Alaska Food Policy Council](http://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org), an ally of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, we are writing to urge Rep. Peltola to introduce a companion bill to S. 2563, the Tribal Access to Nutrition Assistance Act (Act), which would remove a statutory bar prohibiting American Indians and Alaska Natives who qualify for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from using both programs in the same month.

We know that Federal programs intended to address food insecurity are incredibly important in rural Alaska Native communities across the state. Not only are food costs even higher in rural villages, where many Alaska Native communities are located, but Alaska Native and American Indian people also experience higher rates of food insecurity than the average population. This issue has only been exacerbated by the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

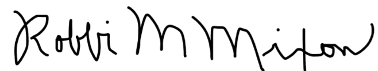
To address these issues, an estimated 276 Tribes across the country provide an estimated 75,000 Native American adults access to healthy food through FDPIR. In Alaska, this program is administered by the [Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium](http://www.alaskanativehealthconsortium.org). The statutory bar from using both FDPIR and SNAP creates a needless bureaucratic headache for anyone who moves between programs, as they must be decertified from one program via an official letter before they can transition to another program. Because FDPIR is largely administered by Tribes, and SNAP by states, this creates an unnecessary and inefficient bureaucratic feedback loop that leaves Tribal members unable to access nutrition programs they are eligible for. We know Alaska cannot afford any additional inefficient bureaucratic snags in delivery of public services.

Additionally, this statutory prohibition is not in place for any other food programs. For example, individuals who qualify for both The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and SNAP may use both; individuals who qualify for both the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and SNAP may use both; and on and on.

Removing this arbitrary barrier would not only remove an unfair prohibition solely aimed at Alaska Natives and American Indians, but also improve food access throughout Indian Country. Please join AFPC and the Native Food Bill Coalition in addressing this issue by introducing a House companion bill of the Tribal Access to Nutrition Assistance Act.

For any questions or comments from the perspective of AFPC, please contact me or Rachel Lord, our Advocacy & Policy Director, at your convenience. We look forward to meeting you in person in early June! Many thanks to Representative Peltola, you, and other staff for all of the work that you do representing Alaskans in the nation's capital.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robbi M. Mixon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robbi Mixon, Executive Director

Cc. Rachel Lord, Advocacy & Policy Director

Attached: NFBC letter supporting the Tribal Access to Nutrition Assistance Act