



Sept. 23, 2020

Statement on the U.S. House funding measure extending Pandemic EBT, federal waivers

We commend lawmakers in the U.S. House for passing a federal funding measure, which includes \$8 billion in nutrition programs that will help families experiencing food insecurity and extends important waivers on federal nutrition programs. It also extends the Pandemic EBT program, which has proven to be a lifeline for many families with children.

It would be difficult to overstate the economic toll this pandemic has taken on families. Due to layoffs, business closings and other disruptions, millions of Americans are experiencing food insecurity, which means they cannot consistently afford enough nutritious food for a healthy lifestyle. Child hunger is soaring during the pandemic, particularly in Black and Latino communities that have been disproportionately affected.

The Pandemic EBT program directly provides funds for food to families with children who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch, or children whose school provides free meals to all students. Though many schools are still providing meals, families might not be able to access them because of common barriers, including lack of transportation and volatile work schedules.

The federal waivers help the state of Illinois and frontline nonprofit workers who are striving to ensure that all who need assistance can get it. While this is an important first step, waiver flexibility only helps if U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) authorizes it. And Pandemic EBT only helps if USDA provides guidance that is workable.

We also urge lawmakers to continue to address the economic crisis with a more comprehensive and longer-term COVID-19 relief package that includes an increase to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. SNAP is the frontline defense against hunger in our country.

We must do everything we can to help families facing hunger.