



California Anti-Hunger Leaders Support Pandemic EBT:

A well-tested solution to feed children during public health emergencies & school closures.

As California braces for the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, many schools are making the difficult decision to close. While these decisions can slow the spread of the disease, the closures disproportionately impact low-income children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals to prevent hunger. California's school nutrition personnel are working around the clock to find solutions. Thanks to the California Department of Education and USDA, California was approved for a waiver to establish non-congregate meal service during closures. However, the waiver still requires children to travel to meal service sites with a parent. This solution, though better than nothing, will not meet the needs of California's poorest children who have no parent at home and no way to travel safely to meal sites. Pandemic EBT offers an effective solution that overcomes these barriers and allow all children to keep nourished.

What is Pandemic EBT? Pandemic EBT, as introduced in H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, is a well-tested solution that delivers nutrition assistance on an EBT card that can be used to purchase groceries for families with school children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals when school is out of session due to a pandemic.

A Well-Tested Solution to Preventing Child Hunger during School Closures: Pandemic EBT is modeled off of Summer EBT, a well-tested federal nutrition program operating in multiple states. In its test phase, Summer EBT eliminated very low food insecurity by one-third, reached 75% of eligible children, and improved children's nutritional intake.

How Would Pandemic EBT Work? At the State's option, families with children eligible for free or reduced price meals at schools that have closed due to a pandemic would receive a pre-loaded EBT card in the mail for every eligible child in an amount no less than the value of school lunch and breakfast, and dependent on the amount of time their school will be closed. These EBT cards with pre-loaded food benefits could be used everywhere that SNAP EBT is used.

Is California Ready to Take Advantage of Pandemic EBT? Yes! California operates several successful EBT programs beyond just SNAP that provide recipients with a pre-paid debit card to purchase food at authorized retailers.

How Would Pandemic EBT Benefit School Nutrition Personnel? While many California employees are staying home for their safety, school nutrition personnel are being asked to continue to work so schools can offer meals during closures. School nutrition personnel are some of the poorest workers on school campuses, and tend to be workers of color and women. They are being forced to take the biggest risk. What's worse, in California, according to SEIU California, these workers would continue to receive pay either way because it would be a declared disaster. Pandemic EBT would allow them to avert the danger of contagion and end the practice of asking them to work for free.

California's anti-hunger community is united in support of Pandemic EBT.

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