

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Resolution HHH-21-03

A RESOLUTION CALLING ON CONGRESS TO PRIORITIZE FOOD INSECURITY

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators has an unwavering commitment to ensuring that none of the citizens of the United States should go hungry or be unsure if they will be able to eat their next meal;

WHEREAS, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 37 million individuals in the United States experienced food insecurity, including more than 11 million children, and that number is rising exponentially as a result of increasing unemployment, economic hardships, and poverty triggered by the COVID-19 public health crisis;

WHEREAS, according to the Brookings Institution, approximately 14 million children faced hunger in June, which is more than five times greater than the number in 2018 and more than double the number at the peak of the Great Recession;

WHEREAS, racial disparities in food insecurity are demonstrated by recent Census Bureau data showing that while 16 percent of all households with children reported that their children did not have enough to eat in the previous week, approximately 30 percent of Black households and 25 percent of Hispanic households with children reported the same;

WHEREAS, food insecurity can contribute to, or exacerbate, nutrition deficits, which has been linked to increased prevalence of chronic diseases and conditions;

WHEREAS, ample research shows that food insecurity negatively affects the physical and cognitive development of children including academic performance;

WHEREAS, many school districts, community organizations, and state and local governments are working tirelessly to meet the growing nutritional needs of families;

WHEREAS, the national unemployment rate is the highest since the Great Depression and double the Great Recession;

WHEREAS, according to a recent poll by the Pew Charitable Trusts, more than half of adults in lower-income households, 44 percent of Black adults, and 61 percent of Hispanic adults say they or someone in their household has lost a job or taken a pay cut due to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides eligible families with a grocery benefit they can use to purchase groceries directly;

WHEREAS, SNAP is a safe, effective, and responsible way to ensure that vulnerable families can get the food they need during this unprecedented crisis;

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WHEREAS, SNAP assistance has long been recognized as an effective economic stimulus during economic downturn, generating between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity for every \$1.00 spent through the program;

WHEREAS, increasing investments in SNAP would both combat hunger during this time of rising food insecurity and boost the economy struggling with record unemployment;

WHEREAS, an estimated 22 million students across the country rely on free or reduced-price meals each day;

WHEREAS, Congress established the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program to provide grocery assistance to families that receive free and reduced-price school meals when schools initially closed due to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, P-EBT has played a critical role in supporting food access for many families with children that rely on school meals; and

WHEREAS, P-EBT assistance will continue to be needed as schools adopt non-traditional operation models and face the prospect of COVID-19-related closures throughout the upcoming school year.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) calls on Congress to appropriate addition funding for the SNAP program to reduce food insecurity and help ensure an effective and equitable economic recovery;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL urges Congress to continue distribution of P-EBT to offset meals missed by children traditionally participating in child nutrition programs, like summer and school meals regardless if schools are able to reopen;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL calls on Congress to prioritize food security as it continues to respond to COVID-19 and the economic recovery from the pandemic continues; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

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SPONSOR: Representative Shevrin Jones (FL)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Health and Human Services Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Representative David J. Mack, III (SC) and Senator Marilyn Moore (CT)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 3, 2020

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President