



## **Congressional Action Needed to Strengthen the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act created the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program, which offers an important opportunity to provide nutritional resources to families who have lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to COVID-19 school closures. Eligible families receive money on a new or existing EBT card with the value of free school breakfast and lunch for the days that schools are closed. The value on the EBT card is approximately \$5.70 per day, per student, retroactive to when the school initially closed.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have been approved to operate P-EBT.<sup>1</sup> As such, they are able to provide critical nutritional support to families in need. Without congressional action, the new program is set to expire on September 30, 2020. In addition, there are a number of ways to build on the success of P-EBT so that it reaches all of the families with children who would benefit from additional nutritional support. Below are the provisions that would strengthen P-EBT.

- **Extend P-EBT through December 2021 to allow families to receive benefits through the summer and during any additional times when an outbreak forces schools to close and people to practice social distancing.**
- **Make P-EBT more responsive to the variety of ways that schools may operate in the upcoming school year that are due to the pandemic.** As schools look ahead to the fall, many are considering a reduction in the number of days or hours that students will be physically at school. This is expected to impact the number of school breakfasts and lunches that students will be able to receive. States should be able to provide P-EBT benefits to replace those missed meals in addition to the current approach, which provides benefits if schools close for five consecutive days or more.
- **Extend P-EBT to low-income families who rely on meals provided through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** Currently, P-EBT is limited to families whose children depend on school meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), but it does not respond to the need

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://frac.org/pebt> for a complete list of states that have been approved to operate Pandemic EBT and for additional information about P-EBT.

created when child care centers close and no longer provide meals through CACFP.

- **Provide funding to cover the state administrative costs of operating P-EBT.** Funding is provided to states to operate school and child care nutrition programs. P-EBT is meant to replace those programs, and it is difficult for states to absorb these additional costs.
- **Ensure that families who are newly eligible for P-EBT are able to receive the benefits.** It can be hard for families who are being hit by the economic crisis and who have never received benefits before the pandemic to navigate this process. Supporting these efforts will help to ensure that newly eligible families are able to receive benefits as well.
- **Allow Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa to implement P-EBT.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture should work with them to determine if it is feasible to operate P-EBT and to support their implementation of this critical program.
- **Allow states to automatically provide P-EBT benefits to school children whose households participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and Medicaid (if the household income is 185 percent or below the federal poverty level).** This would ensure that low-income children are not missed by P-EBT, due to administrative barriers, and would ease administrative requirements for states to be able to provide benefits from multiple federal nutrition programs.

To learn more about the positive impacts that P-EBT has had on families across the country, check out these studies:

- [New America's Report: "It has meant everything": How P-EBT Helped Families in Michigan;](#)
- [Pandemic EBT: "It has Meant Everything": A Snapshot of Michigan's P-EBT Program \(New America/Ed Trust/FRAC\);](#) and
- [The Hamilton Project's Report: The Effect of Pandemic EBT on Measures of Food Hardship.](#)