



April 16, 2020

The Honorable Governor Mike DeWine  
Governor of Ohio

Director Kim Hall  
Department of Job and Family Services

Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria  
Ohio Department of Education

Dear Governor DeWine, Director Kim Hall and Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria,

We deeply appreciate the efforts of your administration to keep all Ohioans safe and healthy during this historic pandemic. We also appreciate the steps the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) has taken to support Ohioans during this public health emergency. We write to strongly encourage the Department to swiftly submit a plan for Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer, or P-EBT to the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Nutrition Services (USDA-FNS).

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 provides new authority and flexibility to the USDA and states to adapt and manage the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in order to meet the needs of families and children during the pandemic. The Act allows states to provide short-term benefit increases under two provisions, (1) Emergency Allotments (EA) and (2) Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT). We are glad that Ohio recognized the need to submit a plan to provide emergency allotments and are hopeful these allotments will help families, but Ohio must now submit a plan under the second provision of the Act, Pandemic-EBT.

The program would provide additional benefits, known as [Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\)](#) to SNAP and non-SNAP households with Children who receive school-based free or reduced meals, if their school will be or has been closed for at least 5 consecutive days during a public health emergency. The household allotment amount will be at least the value of school meals at the free rate over the course of 5 school days for each eligible child in the household, or about [\\$114](#) a month per child.

Several states, including Arizona, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Rhode Island have already submitted plans and many other states plan to submit this week. Both Michigan and Rhode Island's P-EBT plans have been approved by the USDA. Ohio must follow suit to assist Ohio families struggling to keep food on the table.



During the 2019-2020 school year, 4 in 10 Ohio students, [717,740 Ohio children](#), received free or reduced priced lunch. The P-EBT would provide an estimated additional \$81,000,000 each month in food assistance going directly to Ohio's children and families.

Importantly, Ohio must consider in its plan, how it will reach families of children who may not have qualified for free or reduced lunch prior to the pandemic, but due to a change in family income, now would be eligible. We estimate that over 200,000 children in Ohio have parents who have lost a job in the last two weeks of March.

Ohio families are struggling with a number of challenges to meet basic needs, the ability to put food on the table should not be one. The Pandemic-EBT program is available for all states, including Ohio. We urge you not to wait. Families need this relief now.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Bergfeld  
*Advocates for Ohio's Future*

Tracy Nájera  
*Children's Defense Fund-Ohio*

Julie Sellers  
*Cincinnati Federation of Teachers  
Ohio 8-Co-Chair*

Eric Gordon  
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Ohio 8 Co-Chair*

Richard Murray  
*Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools  
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