



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Over 250K San Diego Children Eligible for \$365 through federal hunger relief

Pandemic-EBT program provides food benefits while schools are closed

San Diego, June 11, 2020 – In May 2020, the State of California launched the Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) program to address increased food insecurity due to COVID-19 amongst San Diego children. Students who are enrolled in free or reduced-price school breakfasts and lunches are eligible to receive a one-time payment of \$365 for groceries in addition to *grab-n-go* meals currently served by schools and community-based organizations while schools are closed.

According to the San Diego Hunger Coalition, an estimated 250,000 children and youth are eligible to receive the benefit. The Hunger Coalition's Executive Director, Anahid Brakke, said, *"If we can successfully enroll all kids who are eligible for the program, that would bring about \$90M to San Diego County for hunger relief. Spreading the word about P-EBT and helping families apply should be an immediate and urgent priority for everyone working on hunger relief right now."*

California is currently halfway through its enrollment period. Families have until June 30, 2020 to apply for P-EBT benefits online at ca.p-ebt.org.

"Children because of this pandemic are missing out on many enriching benefits that schools provide, but this program ensures students and their families have access to the money for nutritious meals," said Supervisor Nathan Fletcher, Co-chair of the County's COVID-19 Subcommittee. *"Let's prevent kids from going hungry and join the San Diego Hunger Coalition in educating families about the Pandemic-EBT benefits."*

COVID-19 has increased food insecurity throughout San Diego County due to heightened unemployment and reduced incomes associated with reduced hours and closed businesses. Many families that rely on school meals to make ends meet have limited access to the current *grab-n-go* meals provided by 33 of San Diego County's 42 school districts. P-EBT will help to fill that gap.

"Since COVID-19 forced the closure of schools some three months ago, we have distributed more than 2 million meals to our most vulnerable students but we know many of our families need additional help as they cope with loss of income, food insecurity and homelessness," said Richard Barrera, vice president of the San Diego Unified Board of Education. *"It is important that our families get the information they need to receive this important benefit."*

"As we close out this school year, San Diego Unified will continue to serve meals to students at our food distribution centers all summer long," said San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten. *"Schools may close for the summer, but hunger does not take a vacation. I would like to thank Supervisor Fletcher and the San Diego Hunger Coalition for their commitment to fighting food insecurity in San Diego County, and for helping us reach families who are eligible for the Pandemic-EBT cards."*

P-EBT and school meals are not a Public Charge benefit and will not affect an individual's legal status. Additionally, P-EBT may be used in combination with other forms of federal food assistance including school meals, WIC, and CalFresh. Hunger Relief advocates encourage families to make use of all available resources during the pandemic to avoid experiencing food insecurity or hunger.

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A recording of today's press conference will be available for download at sdhunger.org/press-room.

Interviews with community members and hunger relief experts may be arranged following the press conference. Please email Joe Shumate, San Diego Hunger Coalition, at joseph@sdhunger.org or call him at 310.903.7480.

Additional information about P-EBT is available at sdhunger.org/p-ebt.

Additional information about school meals during COVID-19 are available at sdhunger.org/meals-for-kids