

May 3, 2020

Honorable Pete Ricketts
Office of Governor Ricketts
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

RE: Implement Pandemic EBT to Feed Nebraska Children During COVID-19 Outbreak

Governor Ricketts,

We appreciate the steps you have taken to support Nebraskans during this public health emergency. It is critical that all Nebraskans' basic needs are met through the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak so we can all stay safe and healthy. By taking up federal options to lengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recertification periods, implementing maximum household allotments, and waiving requirements around eligibility interviews, you've taken action to help reduce the impact of food insecurity in Nebraska during these challenging times. However, there is more that can and should be done to ensure Nebraska families can continue to put food on the table through the duration of this pandemic.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, the same federal legislation that allowed states to request longer recertification periods and distribute increased allotments, also allows states to provide additional resources to SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who receive school-based free or reduced price meals, if their school has been closed for at least five consecutive days during a public health emergency. This flexibility, called Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), would provide meal replacement funds for kids in Nebraska who are not receiving the school meals they otherwise would be.

While we know the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and school districts across Nebraska have worked extremely hard over the last several weeks to provide grab and go meals to students, not all families are able to access these meals. By taking up P-EBT, we can better ensure that the over 170,600 children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals have enough to eat during this public health emergency by providing the value of those lost school meals directly to their families through an EBT card. This would amount to approximately \$114 per month per child and would provide an estimated additional \$53.5 million in food assistance directly to Nebraska's children and families.

The undersigned organizations urge you to direct the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to promptly submit a plan to implement a P-EBT program in Nebraska. Many states, including Alabama, Arizona, Illinois, Texas, Missouri, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, Oregon, Wisconsin, Nevada, Maryland, West Virginia, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts have already submitted plans and others are in the process of doing so. We must follow suit in Nebraska.

All Nebraskans are feeling the effects of COVID-19, but those with low-paying jobs and the fewest financial resources are being disproportionately harmed by the pandemic. Many Nebraska families are struggling for a myriad of reasons right now, and wondering where their next meal is coming from should not be one of them. Efficiently implementing a P-EBT program should be a top priority for your

administration in continuing to respond to this public health emergency in a way that puts the health and safety of all Nebraskans at the forefront. We appreciate your ongoing efforts during this time and are eager to support you and your team in developing a P-EBT proposal.

Sincerely,

Center for People in Need

Center for Rural Affairs

Community Action of Nebraska

Completely KIDS

Food Bank for the Heartland

Food Bank of Lincoln

Heartland Family Services

Nebraska Appleseed

Nebraska Child Health and Education Alliance

Nebraska Education Collaborative

Together, Inc.

Voices for Children in Nebraska

Women's Fund of Omaha