



August 20, 2020

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

RE: Re-open Pandemic-EBT Application and Continue SNAP Emergency Supplemental Allotments to Feed More Nebraskans During COVID-19 Outbreak

Governor Ricketts,

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts have severely hindered the ability of many Nebraska families to put food on the table. Estimates of food insecurity and child hunger in our state vary, but the strong consensus of recent research is that Nebraska families, and especially families with children, face continuing and historically unprecedented hardship.

According to the U.S. Census Household Pulse survey, the number of Nebraska households experiencing food insecurity since March has nearly doubled, reaching as high as 155,000 ([12.4%](#)). Alarming, while parents generally buffer children from food scarcity, skipping or skimping on meals to feed their children, during this crisis children themselves are experiencing hunger at rates unprecedented in recent decades. Adults in [1 in 4 Nebraska households with children](#) (see Food Table 5) report that children in their household didn't have enough to eat because adults couldn't afford it.

In the face of this crisis, the undersigned organizations urge you to (1) re-open applications for Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) benefits, and (2) continue providing emergency SNAP allotments as long as the public health emergency continues.

We applaud the state's work to develop and rapidly implement P-EBT statewide in June and July, despite challenges with data matching and the significant collaboration required between

the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education. As a result of those efforts, over 52,000 children applied for P-EBT, out of a total of roughly 102,000 application-eligible children. The new school year affords an opportunity to reach the 50,000 kids who were eligible for P-EBT but did not successfully complete the application before the July deadline. This opportunity is particularly important as the start of school removes a significant barrier that many parents faced in attempting to complete the P-EBT application during the summer.

To make up the gap between eligible children and those receiving the benefit, we recommend the following actions:

- Submit a P-EBT plan amendment to USDA to re-open applications through Sept. 15.
- Conduct outreach through schools, community partners, and earned and paid media to inform families of the new opportunity to apply for the benefit.
- Provide training and/or informational materials for school administrators explaining the benefit and what information parents may need to complete the P-EBT application.

We also applaud the state's utilization of emergency supplemental SNAP allotments since the Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized this flexibility in March. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has [clarified](#) that states can request additional months of emergency allotments as long as the federal government has declared a public health emergency and the state has issued an emergency or disaster declaration. As long as these conditions are met, Nebraska should continue to request this flexibility to better support struggling Nebraskans, like the [38 other states](#) that have continued to do so at least through August.

To continue supporting Nebraska families participating in the SNAP program, we recommend the following actions:

- Make a request to the USDA to extend the emergency SNAP allotments for the month of August.
- Continue making requests to extend providing emergency supplements until the emergency is over.

These actions would provide essential aid to struggling families at a time of great need, and millions of dollars of additional economic stimulus as our state economy continues to recover.

Should the state choose to re-open the P-EBT application process or extend the emergency SNAP allotments, national and state non-profit partners stand ready to provide material, technical, and communications support for this effort. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented crisis. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Center for People in Need
Center for Rural Affairs
Community Action of Nebraska
Food Bank of Lincoln, Inc.
Food Bank for the Heartland
Health Center Association of Nebraska
Heartland Family Service
Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska State Education Association
No More Empty Pots
The Big Garden
Together, Inc.
Voices for Children in Nebraska