

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 26, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Office of Governor  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We are writing to urge you to apply and extend Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) through the summer of 2021, providing upward of \$820 million in federal food assistance. Florida participated in this program from August 2020 to June 2021. In April 2021, the U.S. Department of Agriculture extended P-EBT through the current summer months; however, Florida is the largest state that has not applied to extend these benefits. The expiration of these funds will continue to exasperate food insecurities for many Floridians.

The P-EBT program was created last year by the “Families First Coronavirus Response Act” to help feed children who missed meals because they could not attend schools in person during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents of children who qualify for free or reduced lunches received an extra \$375 a month to help pay for their kid’s meal. More than 2 million Florida children would qualify for these additional funds if the program was extended through the summer months.

With the Delta variant playing a role in the surge, infections in the state continue to climb. Unlike the first wave, which severely affected seniors, researchers are reporting that the newest wave of cases involves younger people who are not vaccinated. Data from the Florida Department of Health showed that one out of every four infections happened in someone 19 or younger. The most recent seven-day period in Florida data, August 13 through August 19, showed children 12 and younger with a positivity rate of 23%, and those age 12 to 19 have a positivity rate of nearly 25%.

Since hundreds of thousands of students across the state have returned to school over the last month, positivity rates and pediatric hospitalizations have continued to climb, forcing school closures and additional precautions to protect children. As kids return home to quarantine and classes are missed, food insecurity remains a problem for many Florida families. A U.S. Census Bureau survey of Florida households from June and July of 2021 found that 14% of adults reported that their children were not eating enough because the household could not afford food. In addition, when our state’s pandemic state of emergency expired in June, it caused SNAP recipients to lose about \$280 million in benefits each month. As these federal programs expire in our state, demand and food insecurities among Florida families and their children will continue to grow.

Fortunately, there is no deadline for the state of Florida to apply for summer P-EBT benefits and these funds can be retroactively distributed to families. Given that the pandemic continues to worsen in our state, especially among children, it would be abhorrent to leave millions of federal dollars on the table that could feed people in need, at no additional cost to Floridians. Therefore, we request that you immediately apply for and extend P-EBT benefits through the summer. We appreciate your full and fair consideration of this letter and our offices stand prepared to assist you in any way necessary.

Sincerely,



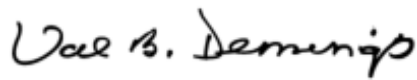
Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy  
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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Val Demings  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



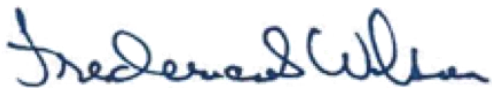
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress

CC” Secretary of the Department of Children and Families Shevaun Harris  
Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Nikki Fried