

For Immediate Release

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Greater Cleveland Food Bank Calls on Congress to Urgently Increase SNAP by 15 Percent

Cleveland, OH - Greater Cleveland Food Bank is concerned about the delay in action by Congress to increase the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit by 15 percent for families struggling with food insecurity during the pandemic and resulting economic downturn. With more than 1.5 million Ohioans having filed for unemployment since March, our food bank is seeing an increase in families coming to our doors – many for the first time. In fact, nearly 30,000 new families have visited our network of emergency food programs for the first time over the past five months. And while we had hoped to see the demand fall as the summer comes to an end, we have instead seen an uptick in households visiting our weekly drive-thru distributions for help, growing from around 1,600-1,800 households per week to more than 2,200 households per week over the past three weeks.

The reality is that food banks cannot keep up with this demand alone. In order to ensure that our community has the nutritious food they need, we must see an increase to SNAP. SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger, providing nine meals for every one meal provided by food banks. SNAP is a proven and cost-effective way to help families keep food on the table as they struggle with unemployment, lost hours at work, and rising grocery prices. And, SNAP keeps the economy moving- during the last recession, for every \$1 distributed through SNAP, \$1.70 was generated in the economy.

As negotiations continue over the next COVID-19 relief package, we are calling on our partners in Congress to prioritize boosting the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent and extending the Pandemic EBT Program (P-EBT), a new program championed by local leader Congresswoman Marcia Fudge that provides grocery assistance to children missing meals if schools are closed. These priorities were included in the House's HEROES Act, but were not included in the Senate's HEALS Act, which was introduced in late July.

Greater Cleveland Food Bank and other community resources cannot meet the need on their own. Charity, business, and the government must work together to ensure that families in this country – many of whom are facing hunger for the first time– are not forced to choose between putting food on the table or keeping a roof over their head. We respectfully ask Congress to ensure every child, senior, and individual has enough food on their table by increasing SNAP by 15 percent and extending P-EBT.

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