

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAMILIES OF 32,500 STUDENTS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY HAVE ONE MONTH TO CLAIM UP TO \$1,192 IN FOOD BENEFITS

SAN DIEGO, CA, July 7 – This morning, San Diego Hunger Coalition held a press conference at Northgate Gonzalez Market store located in Barrio Logan with an urgent announcement to inform households in California that they can request a reissuance of the P-EBT (Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer) 2.0 card. Households who think they qualified but did not receive a P-EBT 2.0 card in 2021 should call the helpline number 1.800.887.8230. Families only have one month to claim these benefits from June 29 through August 1, 2023.

Anahid Brakke, CEO of San Diego Hunger Coalition opened the press conference stating that “at \$1,192 per student, helping families recoup missed PEBT 2.0 benefits is, by far, the single biggest and most important opportunity our community has to reduce summer hunger in 2023. This is an all-hands-on deck situation to get the word out.”

P-EBT is a federal program that was set up to provide money for groceries while schools and childcare were closed during the Public Health Emergency. Benefits are issued on an EBT card to the families of children who were eligible to replace the free or reduced-price meals served at childcare or schools that children may have missed because of the pandemic.

P-EBT 2.0 benefits were issued to children who were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals and/or in the CalFresh program from October 2020 - August 2021. All P-EBT 2.0 cards should have been received by December 2021, however, data uncovered by San Diego Hunger Coalition revealed that an estimated 32,500 students in San Diego County who were eligible did not receive their cards. The average P-EBT 2.0 benefit amount for each student is \$1,200 which is approximately \$38.7 million available to families if they call California Department of Social Services in the month of July to reclaim their lost benefits.

Assemblymember David Alvarez, urged residents to claim their P-EBT 2.0 card. “Access to nutritious meals is crucial for children, especially during the summer months when schools are closed. P-EBT assists families in ensuring that their kids have access to the food they need. I urge all eligible families to take advantage of the P-EBT benefits before the 24-day deadline passes. Once the deadline passes, unclaimed funds will be lost, and the opportunity will be gone.”

It is important to note that while hunger affects children of all ages, races and ethnicities, nutrition insecurity affects children of color at much higher rates than their white counterparts. Recent San Diego Hunger Coalition demographic breakdown data shows that, in San Diego, 38% of our Hispanic/Latino population are nutrition insecure, followed by 37% of our Black population, 29% of our Native American Population, 26% of those who identify with two or more races, and 25% of our white population.

Knowing the transformational effects that P-EBT benefits have on families, San Diego Hunger Coalition successfully advocated with San Diego’s elected officials in the California State Legislature and U.S. Congress to encourage the use of US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) administrative authority to extend the deadline on P-EBT 2.0 expungement and re-open access, so that eligible families could be given an opportunity to claim and use their 2.0 benefits.

"This additional window of time for San Diego families to activate their P-EBT benefits is an opportunity to ensure that every eligible household receives the support they need," said Assemblymember Chris Ward. "I'm grateful for



the partnership of the San Diego Hunger Coalition so every child has access to the nourishment they need to thrive."

The USDA approved this extension and reissuance in December 2022, and the benefit reissuance window is NOW OPEN (June 29-August 1, 2023) for families to claim their 2.0 benefits.

"Pandemic P-EBT benefits have proven to reduce childhood hunger by striving to reach all kids who need food, including those who may have trouble accessing traditional meal sites", said Jesus Mendoza, Western Regional Administrator with USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

P-EBT is not a public charge, and neither is any other type of food assistance. On September 9, 2022, the federal government published a final rule regarding changes to "public charge" determinations and the use of public benefits. Accordingly, to California Health & Human Services Agency, "the final rule limits federal immigration officials' ability to consider receipt of public benefits in granting individuals entry into the United States or when they apply to become lawful permanent residents (also known as green card holders)." The final rule took effect on December 23, 2022.

P-EBT cards can be used at most grocery stores, farmers markets, and some online retailers, though delivery fees may apply. Just like with CalFresh, foods that are served hot or already prepared are not covered.

"At Northgate Markets, we are proud to participate in this federal program set up to provide money for groceries while schools and childcare were closed during the recent Public Health Emergency," said Oscar González, Co-President, Northgate González Markets earlier this morning. "Every day, we see the benefits families receive from using their P-EBT cards to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and other eligible food items, and we urge every family that qualifies to apply now or before the end of July when the application process terminates."

On the closing remarks Joshua Kohler from Chula Vista Elementary School District highlighted that "every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their dreams. Every child deserves a public school that opens the doors to reach them. Every child deserves nutritious healthy food, and P-EBT 2.0 is here to help families keep your kids fed, learning, and thriving."

Teresa Blanco from Northgate Gonzalez Market, and representatives from Casa Familiar, Episcopal Community Services and MAAC were also present supporting these outreach and advocacy efforts. For the latest information on P-EBT 2.0, please visit www.sdhunger.org/p-ebt.

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Founded in 1974, the San Diego Hunger Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization that leads collaborative action to end hunger supported by research, education, and advocacy. Its vision is that everyone in San Diego County has enough food for an active, healthy life. Learn more at www.sdhunger.org.