

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ONLY ONE MORE WEEK FOR 69,000 CHILDREN IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY TO CLAIM AN AVERAGE OF \$1,192 IN FOOD BENEFITS

SAN DIEGO, CA, July 24 – Families have until August 1 to claim an average of \$1,192 in food benefits. Households who think they qualify but did not receive a Pandemic EBT 2.0 card in late 2021, should call the helpline number 1.800.887.8230 before the August 1st deadline.

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) is a federal program that was set up to provide money for groceries while schools and childcare sites were closed during the Public Health Emergency. The second round of P-EBT (P-EBT 2.0) was the largest round at an average of \$1,192 per child and was issued to children who were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals and/or receiving CalFresh benefits during the period of October 2020 - August 2021. Most cards were delivered in December 2021.

Initial data uncovered by San Diego Hunger Coalition revealed that an estimated 32,500 P-EBT 2.0 cards sent to families in San Diego County were not activated, largely because the cards went to outdated addresses. A recent study by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) now reports that the families of 69,000 eligible children in San Diego County are eligible to reclaim missing P-EBT 2.0 benefits, which could bring as much as \$82.2 million in food assistance to the region for households that are experiencing nutrition insecurity this summer.

Last year, San Diego Hunger Coalition enlisted the support of San Diego's elected officials in the California State Legislature and U.S. Congress to encourage US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to use its administrative authority to give eligible families another opportunity to claim and use their 2.0 benefits. Thanks to these advocacy efforts, the USDA approved the State of California to re-issue P-EBT 2.0 cards to eligible families. California has given families the short window of June 29 - August 1, 2023, to call the helpline to request a reissued P-EBT 2.0 card.

On July 7th, San Diego Hunger Coalition announced the opportunity for families to get an average of \$1,192 per child by requesting a new Pandemic-EBT 2.0 card, and SDHC has since released an outreach toolkit in English and Spanish available on their website (www.sdhunger.org). Visitor traffic to the Hunger Coalition's website has increased by 500% since the initial announcement, which reflects how much families need this information and support.

Last week, the Hunger Coalition and MAAC created a partnership where MAAC staff will help take calls from parents who are having trouble navigating the state helpline or who have received incorrect information about their eligibility from helpline staff. “We are grateful to Arnulfo and his team at MAAC for helping San Diego Hunger Coalition with outreach and parent advocacy,” said Anahid Brakke, President & CEO of San Diego Hunger Coalition. MAAC is one of the largest social service nonprofit organizations in San Diego County, serving over 100,000 individuals each year countywide.

“Programs like P-EBT 2.0 card are crucial in reducing food insecurity and bridging budget gaps for low-income families during economic hardships. They have a profound impact on the overall well-being of children and youth, leading to enhanced health, academic achievements, and economic mobility for them and their families,” said Arnulfo Manriquez, President and Chief Executive Officer for MAAC. “MAAC has partnered with San Diego Hunger Coalition to provide direct assistance to eligible families in obtaining this relief, to ensure those benefits are not lost.”



"The work we are doing stimulates the local economy by boosting people's household food budgets. This allows families to purchase more healthy food at local groceries stores and frees up cash in their limited budgets for other goods and services, supporting other parts of the economy as well," said Brakke. "The value of receiving one P-EBT card with \$1,192 for groceries equates to about 16 trips to a food bank. Parents would have to go to a distribution everyday Monday-Friday for about 3 weeks to obtain this much food."

"Our staff is over-capacity right now, but our team members are passionate and working tirelessly to reach as many eligible families as possible and guide them through the process of claiming their P-EBT 2.0 benefits. P-EBT 2.0 is an immediate solution to summer hunger this year, but families only have 5 more business days to call. The Hunger Coalition urgently needs donations for this work," expressed Brakke.

San Diego Hunger Coalition is not done advocating for San Diego families and is now asking the State to extend the deadline to request new cards by another month "For now, we have this short window, and we need to make sure families call the helpline and check their eligibility," stated Brakke. "This money was set aside for these families and the State of California should do everything it can to make sure they get it."

San Diego Hunger Coalition, which recently won a San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce award for Best Community-Minded Small Business, leads a number of programs in addition to its advocacy work. If you would like to learn more about P-EBT 2.0 or donate to support these efforts, 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.