



The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Secretary Shevaun Harris  
Department of Children and Families  
415 North Monroe Street, Suite 400  
Tallahassee, FL 32303

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**Re: Request that Florida Elect to Participate in 2025 Summer EBT by the Federal Deadline of August 15, 2024**

Dear Governor DeSantis and Secretary Harris:

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully urge the state of Florida to participate in the 2025 Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program (Summer EBT) to help fight food insecurity among low-income children. Summer EBT is a food assistance program established for children by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023.<sup>1</sup> Summer EBT provides each eligible child approximately \$40 per month in grocery assistance during the summer, when school is out, to supplement summer meal programs. To preserve the option to participate in Summer EBT for 2025, Florida must notify and submit supporting documentation to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) by August 15, 2024.

Many children in low-income families have access to free or reduced-price lunches during the school year through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).<sup>2</sup> However, during the summer, when school is out, those

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<sup>1</sup> H.R.2617 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2617>.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Family Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals, <https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/NutritionPrograms/National-School-Lunch-Program/Family-Application-for-Free-and-Reduced-Price-School-Meals>.

children no longer receive meals through that program. Summer EBT was created to ensure that families continue to have resources to keep these children from going hungry during the summer. Summer EBT was specifically designed to work in tandem with other food assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Summer BreakSpot, to put food on the plates of children during the summer.<sup>3</sup> Although SNAP and Summer BreakSpot are a saving grace for children in struggling families, those programs are not designed to meet all of their family's food needs. In addition, Summer BreakSpot only reaches about 17 percent of eligible children<sup>4</sup> due, in part, to the fact that not all families have transportation to participating locations,<sup>5</sup> such as parks and libraries.

Summer EBT is particularly important because hunger continues to plague 1 in 7 children in Florida,<sup>6</sup> which experienced one of the highest spikes (6.4 percent) in grocery costs<sup>7</sup> in the country last year. Parents are often forced to make hard choices between buying food for their children or paying for other necessities such as rent and electric bills.<sup>8</sup> As a result, food banks, food pantries in houses of worship, and other non-profit emergency food providers are facing an extraordinary uptick in demand, which they are hard-pressed to meet.<sup>9</sup>

In 2024, Florida chose not to participate in Summer EBT, even though the program would have provided over 2 million hungry children with roughly \$259 million in federal food assistance.<sup>10</sup> This was a missed

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<sup>3</sup> Food Research & Action Center, The Importance of Summer EBT: Why States Must Operate Summer EBT and Summer Nutrition Programs, <https://frac.org/wpcontent/uploads/Summer-EBT-and-Summer-Nutrition-national.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Feeding Florida, "Fighting Summer Hunger through Child Nutrition Reauthorization," May 11, 2022, <https://www.feedingflorida.org/staying-informed/news/2022-05-11-fighting-summer-hunger-through-child-nutrition-reauthorization>.

<sup>5</sup> Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Summer Food Service Program, What is Summer BreakSpot?, <https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/Summer-Food-Service-Program>.

<sup>6</sup> According to Feeding America, 613,180 children in Florida, or 1 in 7 children in the state, face hunger. See <https://state.nokidhungry.org/florida/>.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Huffman and John Bortin, "The rising cost of groceries by state (2024)" *Consumer Affairs*, updated November 22, 2023, <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/finance/cost-of-groceries-by-state.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Feeding Florida, Hunger & Food Access, <https://www.feedingflorida.org/staying-informed/hunger-food-insecurity>.

<sup>9</sup> Treasure Roberts, "Second Harvest Food Bank had to buy food to help hungry Central Floridians. Now they're asking the state for help," Click Orlando/WKMG, updated December 2, 2023, <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2023/12/02/second-harvest-food-bank-of-central-florida-seeks-state-funding/>.

<sup>10</sup> Food Research and Action Center, "The Summer EBT Program Would Reduce Hunger in Florida," December 2023, [https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-State-Fact-Sheets\\_FL.pdf](https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-State-Fact-Sheets_FL.pdf).

opportunity for all Florida children who face food insecurity. While hunger affects children of all races and ethnicities in the state, children of color are disproportionately harmed by Florida’s decision to pass on Summer EBT for 2024. Black and Latino/a children face a concerning reality where they are twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared to their counterparts.<sup>11</sup>

Although 50 percent of administrative costs must be borne by the state, the federal government pays 100 percent of the cost of Summer EBT benefits as well as the remainder of a state’s administrative expenses in running the program. The economic impact of Summer EBT benefits, which participating families would spend at grocery stores, farmers markets, and farm stands, is estimated at as much as \$466 million.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Summer EBT has been proven to reduce hunger and support healthier diets of children in a past demonstration project funded by the USDA.<sup>13</sup> Results included increased consumption of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and decreased consumption of sugary beverages.

Expanding the Summer EBT program and enabling summer meal programs to be more flexible is the simplest and most practical way to prevent child hunger when school is out, especially for children in rural communities. It is not too late to implement the Summer EBT program. States have until August 15, 2024, to submit a Plan for Operations and Management (POM), expenditure plan, and their intent to administer Summer EBT for the following summer under FNS’ Summer EBT Interim Final Rule.<sup>14</sup>

We are optimistic that given the urgency of the need to address child hunger and the resulting economic boon that Summer EBT would bring to the state as a whole, Florida will resolve fiscal and logistic barriers to meet FNS’ deadline and prepare to roll out Summer EBT in 2025.

We stand ready to support the state through the process to implement Summer EBT and ensure Florida’s children have the resources they need to thrive.

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<sup>11</sup> Feeding America, “Facts about child hunger,” <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts>.

<sup>12</sup> See note 10.

<sup>13</sup> USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “Summer EBT — A Tested and Effective Strategy for Ending Summer Hunger,” November 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sebt/evidence>.

<sup>14</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, Interim Final Rule re: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs (Subpart C— Requirements of Summer EBT Agencies), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/12/29/2023-28488/establishing-the-summer-ebt-program-and-rural-non-congregate-option-in-the-summer-meal-programs#p-1456>.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World  
Florida Impact  
11th Episcopal District AMEC  
4 The Kids Entertainment  
Abundant Harvests Farm LLC  
Achievement Center for Children & Families  
ADONAI SECOND CHANCES, INC  
AEDAP  
Allegany Franciscan Ministries  
American Children's Campaign  
American Heart Association  
Angry Booch  
Apple Diva Gourmet Candy Apples  
Arise Horizon Community Outreach Services  
Audubon Park Covenant Church  
Bach Notary Services  
Branches United Methodist Church  
Capitol Alliance Group, Inc  
Caridad Center, Inc.  
Carol City United Methodist Church  
Catalyst Miami  
Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy  
Central Florida Jobs with Justice  
Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation  
Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County  
Christ Church United Methodist Ft. Lauderdale  
Community Foundation of Sarasota County  
Community Justice Project, Inc.  
Concord AME Church  
Connect 2 Greatness  
Disability Rights Florida  
Dorothy Ballard Gibson Lay Organization  
Extended Hands Community Outreach, Inc.  
FABB  
Faith in Florida  
Families for Strong Public Schools  
Farmworker Coordinating Council of Palm Beach County, Inc.  
Feeding Hope Village  
First Congregational UCC Sarasota FL  
First Congregational United Church of Christ

First United Methodist Church of Sanford  
First United Methodist Church, Mt. Dora  
FL National Organization for Women (FL NOW)  
Flipper Chapel AMEC, Tallahassee  
Florida Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.  
Florida Council of Churches  
Florida Freedom to Read Project  
Florida Head Start Association  
Florida Health Advocates  
Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Florida People's Advocacy Center  
Florida Policy Institute  
Florida Public Health Association  
Florida Voices for Health  
FoodRecovery.org  
Forty Carrots Family Center  
Friends of the Riviera Beach Schools  
Girls Inc. of Sarasota County  
Gnarbucha Inc  
Good Hope A.M.E. Church  
Good Trouble St. Johns  
Grace Family Church  
Grant Chapel AME Church  
Greater Miami Jewish Federation  
Gulf Coast Community Foundation  
Gulfstream Goodwill  
Haitian Neighborhood Center, Sant La Inc.  
Hand up project  
Harvest 4 Hearts  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of PBC  
Hispanic Services Council, Inc.  
Indaba Inc  
Integrated Disaster Solutions LLC  
Integrative Wellness  
Jacksonville Quaker Worship Group at the Beach  
James Accounting & Tax Practice, PA  
Jax NOW  
Jewish Community Relations Council  
John Wesley United Methodist Church United Women in Faith  
Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County  
KeepSafe Reimagined DBA ElderrestQ LLC  
Kingdom of God Outreach Ministries  
Kravey Gardens  
League of Women Voters of Broward County

League of Women Voters of Florida  
League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties  
League of Women Voters of Volusia County  
LFK Immigration PA  
Life Changers Global Nation Ministry  
Locally Grown Inc  
LOVING HANDS FOR THE NEEDY, INC  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc  
LWV Polk County  
Manatee Community Foundation  
Marianna District of the AME Church  
Mary F Handy Women's Missionary Society  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
MedGators for Health  
Miami Workers Center  
Moms for Libros  
MomsRising  
Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Mount Olive Development Corporation  
mRelief  
Muslim Women's Organization  
NAACP Florida State Conference  
Nanas, Papas and Friends  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
Nelson's Outreach Ministries  
New Bethel AME Church Sanford  
New Mt Zion AME Church  
Orange Education Support Professionals Association  
P.S. 305  
Parents for Books  
Park Lake Presbyterian Church, Orlando, FL  
Partnership for Child Health  
Pastors for Florida Children  
Peace/Justice Com. Benedictine Sisters of FL  
People Power United  
Picnic Project  
Poinciana United Methodist Church  
Prime Time Palm Beach County Inc.  
PRISM FL  
Progress Florida Education Institute  
Quaker Silent Worship St. Augustine  
Rich Bay African Methodist Episcopal Church, Inc.  
Riverside Arts Market  
Riverside Avondale Preservation

Ruth and Norman Rales Jewish Family Services  
Saint Louis Catholic Church  
Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
School District of Palm Beach County  
SDDBC Ron Brown Chapter  
Seitanic Jax (small business/restaurant)  
SEIU Florida  
Shiloh AMEC  
Sistahs 4 Sisters  
South Florida Hunger Coalition  
SPLC Action Fund  
Sprout Up  
St Johns County Legal Aid  
St. John AME Church  
St. John's on the Lake United Methodist Church  
St. Louis Catholic Church, Miami, FL  
St. Mark Lutheran Church  
St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal  
Star of the Sea Foundation  
Swipe Out Hunger  
Temple Beth-El of St. Petersburg  
Temple Shalom  
Temple Terrace Presbyterian Church  
The Arc of The Glades  
The Florida Association of School Social Workers  
The Garden Network, Inc.  
The Glades Initiative, Inc.  
The Glasser/Schoenbaum Human Services Center  
The Journey Institute, Inc.  
The Lord's Place  
The Mental Health Association of Central Florida  
The Miami Foundation  
THE PURPLE GROUP Lee COUNTY FL  
The Session of First Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee  
The Soup Kitchen, Inc.  
The United Church  
Together for Hope Black Belt  
Top Teens of America  
Tradewinds Financial Planning, LLC  
Trinity United Methodist Church  
UnidosUS  
United Church and Quaker group of St. Augustine  
United Church UCC-DOC St. Augustine  
United Teachers of Dade

United Way Miami  
United Way of Broward County  
United Way of Florida  
United Way of Palm Beach County  
United Way of South Sarasota County  
United Way of Suwannee Valley  
United Way of West Florida  
Urban Health Partnerships, Inc  
Urban Oasis Project  
Vita Nova Inc.  
Wintergarden Presbyterian Church  
Without Borders Worldwide  
Women's Resource Center

cc: Senator Doug Broxson, Chair, Florida Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senator Darryl Rouson, Vice Chair, Florida Senate Appropriations Committee  
Rep. Tom Leek, Chair, Florida House Appropriations Committee  
Rep. Lawrence McClure, Vice Chair, Florida House Appropriations Committee  
Commissioner Wilton Simpson, Florida Department of Agriculture and  
Consumer Services