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 1st, 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. 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). However, during the summer, when school is out, those

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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. 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 due, in part, to the fact that not all families have transportation to participating locations, such as parks and libraries.

Summer EBT is particularly important because hunger continues to plague 1 in 7 children in Florida, which experienced one of the highest spikes (6.4 percent) in grocery costs 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. 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.

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. This was a missed

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5 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.
6 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/.
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.11

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.12 Additionally, Summer EBT has been proven to reduce hunger and support healthier diets of children in a past demonstration project funded by the USDA.13 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.14

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.

12 See note 10.
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'S 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