



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Will Petrik
wpetrik@policymattersohio.org
614.507.8941

Boost food aid to fight hunger, bolster economy

The COVID-19 relief plan released by Senate Republicans Monday doesn't do enough to help Ohioans put food on the table or stabilize the economy, [new analysis from Policy Matters Ohio shows](#). Joined by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks and Children's Defense Fund of Ohio, Policy Matters called on Congress to increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by at least 15% in the next federal relief package. Doing so would stimulate the economy, protect children's health, and make sure that all Ohioans have enough to eat, the report shows. Watch [the press call here](#).

"The Senate's proposal ignores the fact that far too many people don't know where their next meal will come from," Policy Matters Budget Researcher and brief author Will Petrik said. "Our country needs a stimulus package that puts people first and helps jumpstart our economy."

More Ohioans are going hungry during the pandemic. Thousands have been laid off due to social distancing requirements. Closing schools has put a strain on families with children who receive free and reduced-price lunch. In a survey conducted between June 25 and July 7, 1.1 million Ohioans said their household "sometimes or often didn't have enough to eat over the last seven days." Children are among the hardest hit, the report shows. Over 600,000 Ohioans reported in the survey that children in their household were not getting enough to eat because they couldn't afford enough food.

"Food insecurity can affect children's ability to learn and negatively impact their health," Katherine Ungar, JD, Policy Associate for the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio, said. "Food is a basic need and no child should go hungry."

Federal food aid not only helps people make ends meet, it boosts the economy as well. Research shows that four-fifths of SNAP benefits are spent locally within two weeks. Within a month, 97% of SNAP is spent at local grocery stores and markets.

While Ohio's food banks and other charities are doing all they can to step in, the scale of the problem makes federal relief crucial. For every meal a food bank provides, SNAP is estimated to provide nine.

"We do not have to accept hunger as a part of the legacy of this pandemic," said Joree Novotny, the Director of External Affairs with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. "There's a lot of pain we can't prevent right now. People are struggling with isolation, illness, anxiety and uncertainty. We can't take all of that away, but we can and should take hunger out of the equation."

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.