



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**April 7, 2020**

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## **More action needed to ensure no Ohioans go hungry**

To keep people safe during the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Mike DeWine has shut down huge portions of the state economy. These necessary measures have caused uncertainty and instability in the lives of Ohioans. During the week that ended on March 28, 272,117 Ohioans filed unemployment claims, up from 7,046 just two weeks before. Food banks across the state are providing emergency food assistance to a record number of people.

Today, [Policy Matters released an analysis of state and federal food assistance changes](#). It highlights important steps taken and a need for more action at the state and national levels.

“The choices policymakers make now can set a better course for the future. Right now, as the crisis unfolds, Ohio’s leaders need to make sure everyone – no matter where they live or what kind of work they do – can keep putting food on the table,” said Budget Researcher Will Petrik. “SNAP is one of the most effective programs during a recession, because it meets immediate, emergency needs. People spend it quickly so it supports the local economy. SNAP also frees up resources for Ohioans who have fallen on tough times so they don’t have to decide between paying for food or the rent, diapers or medication.”

Petrik called on Congress to increase the maximum SNAP benefit by 15% in the next stimulus bill. This would provide roughly \$25 per person per month, or a little less than \$100 a month to help a family of four afford food and help stabilize consumer spending in local economies.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services acted quickly to ensure Ohio’s current SNAP participants don’t lose benefits and to help newly eligible people access benefits quickly. Petrik said the agency should also:

- Support Ohio’s emergency food distribution network with \$25 million to purchase, pack and distribute over 1 million emergency food boxes.
- Get resources to children who no longer have access to free school meals.
- Make it easier for more households to access SNAP by expanding eligibility.
- Expand food options for SNAP participants.
- Expand curbside pick-up options at grocery stores.
- Educate the public about how to access SNAP benefits.

“In the midst of the COVID-19 emergency, policymakers need to remember what we learned during the Great Recession,” Petrik said. “Back then, policymakers acted swiftly to make SNAP available to as many people as possible and expand the benefit amount. They should do the same now.”

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

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