



December 20, 2023

Office of Governor Michael L. Parson
P.O. Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 established a permanent, nationwide, Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program which begins in summer 2024. This program provides eligible children \$40 per summer month on an EBT card to purchase food and will provide critical nutrition support for families that rely on free and reduced-price meals during the school year.

States must notify the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (USDA FNS) by January 1, 2024, if they are planning to participate in the program, which means that Missouri's Department of Social Services or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must act soon to meet this deadline. **This submission is non-binding, meaning that if Missouri is unable to execute the program, there will be no penalty, even if they have submitted a Notice of Intent.** We ask that your office show your support for this program by directing Missouri's Department of Social Services and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to operate Summer EBT in 2024.

Summer can be the hungriest time of year for families with school-age children. When the school year ends, millions of children from households with low incomes lose access to the school meals they rely on. The Summer Nutrition Programs were designed to replace school meals during summer vacation. These programs play a key role in reducing childhood hunger during the summer, and often provide meals alongside important educational and enrichment programming. Despite these benefits, summer meals reach only a fraction of Missouri's children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals during the school year. Summer EBT, which provides benefits to families to purchase food at retail locations, bridges that gap.

Summer EBT is also an important community economic driver. The program provides benefits using the same model as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Every dollar spent on SNAP generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in local economic activity during an economic downturn. 429,000 children in Missouri are eligible for the Summer EBT benefit, which would result in \$51.5 million in nutrition benefits for the state's struggling families, and at the lowest level, \$77.2 million in local economic activity each summer.



Unlike the Pandemic EBT program, which was always viewed as a temporary support while children lost access to school meals during school closures, Summer EBT is designed to be a permanent program and support for families. It is vital that Missouri leverage this opportunity to keep summer hunger at bay in 2024 and beyond. To successfully run this program, the Department of Social Services and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must work together. With your support, we can ensure that Missouri's 429,000 eligible children get the resources they need to return to the classroom in the fall ready to learn.

Respectfully,

Empower Missouri
Kids Win Missouri
Missouri Budget Project
Missouri Catholic Conference
Missouri Foundation for Health
Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs