



# Gov. Pritzker Announces One Million Illinois Children To Receive Monthly Food Aid

February 23 2021 1:18 PM

SPRINGFIELD – Governor JB Pritzker today announced that beginning next month, approximately one million children across Illinois will receive additional federally funded food benefits, valued at up to \$110 million per month. Following a state request to expand eligibility for the program, the additional food support, funded through the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, is expected to reach about 200,000 more eligible children this school year compared to last year.

Eligible children across the State will automatically receive these benefits on an “EBT Card” mailed directly to their homes. The funding will be distributed by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to Illinois students who are eligible for Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) support.

“Today, we move another step closer to ending hunger for all of Illinois with a benefits program that will support approximately 1 million children across our state. Starting next month, eligible families across Illinois can be on the lookout for a benefits card in the mail to provide additional, federally funded food benefits for their children,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “I’m excited to announce that we’ll be able to serve about 200,000 more children who have previously received this support, each with a larger daily benefit than in the past. My administration is proud to secure more federal funding for Illinois to make this expansion possible.”

Illinois’ P-EBT program brought approximately 764,000 children more than \$259 million worth of nutrition benefits during the 2019-2020 school year. In the coming weeks, eligible Illinois families will begin to receive this year’s expanded benefits.

Families will receive \$6.82 for each day the child did not have access to school meals. This represents a 19% increase over the 2019-2020 school year, when the daily benefit was \$5.70.

“At IDHS, we are committed to ensuring Illinois school children and their families have access to food assistance when they need it and will continue to apply for and maximize any opportunities,” said IDHS Secretary Grace B. Hou.” “We are proud to be one of 16 states to receive the federal approval from the USDA to continue these critical P-EBT benefits that put food on the table for Illinois families and bring in hundreds of millions of federal dollars to Illinois.”

Through P-EBT, eligible school children receive temporary emergency nutrition benefits loaded on EBT cards that are used to purchase food. Children who would have received free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program if their schools were not closed or operating with reduced hours or attendance for at least 5 consecutive days are eligible.

“Research shows that children who are hungry are not able to focus and learn,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “Schools have served more than 113 million meals to students since the pandemic began, and the P-EBT builds on this care and commitment to ensure all Illinois children have their nutritional needs met. The fact that eligible families do not have to take any action and will receive these benefits automatically is a huge sigh of relief. We are proud to collaborate with other state agencies to make this happen and excited share this good news with our students’ families across the state.”

Families do not need to apply for this round of P-EBT benefits. In the coming weeks, they will receive one P-EBT card per eligible child, and the cards can be used to purchase food items at EBT-authorized retailers, which include most major grocery stores in Illinois. Cards will be mailed to the address the school has on file for the child.

Additionally, in the coming month, the Illinois Commission to End Hunger – a public-private partnership organized by the Governor’s office and stakeholders from across the state – will release a new “Roadmap” to end hunger in Illinois. The forthcoming plan focuses on strategies to better connect Illinoisans to nutrition assistance programs, including P-EBT, and promote equitable food access.

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) is part of the U.S. government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, go to <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=131776>.