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**Maryland SNAP Recipients May See a Boost in Benefits,
But More Needs to be Done to Help Households Put Food on the Table**

Statement attributed to Michael J. Wilson, Director, Maryland Hunger Solutions

BALTIMORE, April 24, 2020--This week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the Emergency Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program for food assistance would be temporarily extended on a month-to-month basis due to COVID-19. The extension means SNAP-eligible households will continue receiving the maximum benefit for the foreseeable future. While this is a step in the right direction, it is just a down payment for the overwhelming need to help households keep food on the table.

Although the extension may provide families with a temporary monthly supplement for purchasing nutritious food, this provisional decision falls behind in meeting the overwhelming need for more adequate assistance for Maryland residents.

The pandemic is wreaking massive local and national economic dislocation. Over the last five weeks, 350,000 unemployment claims were filed in Maryland, with more than 45,000 claims just this week.

At Maryland Hunger Solutions, we've been witness to the fall out. We set up a toll-free number — 1-866-821-5552 — that can be accessed from anywhere in the state. As the Maryland State Department of Human Services has announced, SNAP applications are up 71% in March over February, and we all expect the April numbers to exceed the March numbers. Maryland residents wishing to apply for SNAP (known as the Food Supplemental Program in Maryland) can call the toll-free number, leave a message and Maryland Hunger Solutions staff will get back to them and walk them through the application process. Staff also are connecting callers with other much-needed resources, such as pantries, food banks and school meals in their local community.

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger and plays a critical role in stimulating the economy from our grocery stores to our farmers markets. Each \$1 of federal SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity.

It's critical that policymakers boost SNAP benefits in the next COVID-19 emergency relief package as this public health and economic emergency continues. The Trump administration can strengthen SNAP benefits by increasing the maximum benefit by 15 percent, increasing the minimum monthly SNAP benefit to \$30 and withdrawing administrative actions that would eliminate or weaken SNAP benefits. We also urge members of the Maryland congressional delegation to work to include nutrition assistance in the next legislative vehicle. It's urgent and critical.

For more information about SNAP eligibility, visit the website, mdhungersolutions.org, or take a look at the [SNAP Assistance Guide](#).

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Maryland Hunger Solutions works to end hunger and improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of children and families in Maryland.