

# POLICY BRIEF

## IOWA'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NEED SUMMER EBT



### What is Summer EBT?

The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for Children (Summer EBT) is a new federal childhood nutrition program established by a bipartisan deal in Congress in December 2022.

Summer EBT would provide \$120 in nutrition benefits to nearly 245,000 children who qualify for free and reduced price school meals in the state of Iowa during the summer months.

**Summer EBT is evidence-based policy.** Summer EBT is a tried and tested program, with pilot projects gathering evidence on the program's positive impact since 2011. In a final summary report of these demonstration projects, USDA Food and Nutrition Service found that providing a \$60 monthly benefit:

- reduced food insecurity by 8.3 percentage points and decreased food hardship by 33%;
- increased consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains;
- and did not increase consumption of sugar sweetened beverages.

### Iowa parents should be trusted to be able to make the right food choices for their family.

We should be supporting the ability of all Iowans to be able to make healthier food choices, not penalizing low-income families and exasperating food insecurity.

**Food insecurity is reaching startling levels in Iowa right now.** Food banks, food pantries, and other anti-hunger organizations are assisting record-breaking numbers of people. School meal debt is rising. A \$120 nutrition benefit will help families who are struggling to put food on the table.

**Iowa cannot miss out on this historic opportunity to address childhood food insecurity.** Total Summer EBT benefits of \$29.4 million to feed Iowa's kids translates to \$45.2 million in economic activity generated in the state. Iowa would be responsible for half of the administrative costs of this program – an estimated \$2.2 million dollars in the first year and \$1.3 million in subsequent years.

**The existing Summer Food Service Program alone cannot address food insecurity for Iowa children when school is not in session.** Research shows that hunger and food insecurity during summer months can put kids at a serious disadvantage by contributing to learning loss, compromising physical and mental health, and negatively affecting children's ability to thrive. Only a small fraction of eligible Iowa children have access to summer meals in Iowa, and barriers will continue to exist, even with an expansion of sites.

Average Daily Attendance, Summer Food Service Program in Iowa

