

## Advocacy Update 8.9.2020



# NTFB VOICE Advocacy Update

ADVOCATING FOR A HUNGER-FREE, HEALTHY NORTH TEXAS

Greetings advocates! The start of August has been one filled with uncertainty about, well, basically everything. The conclusion of CARES act funding, the start or semi-start to school, and all the other hosts of items surrounding our current state of affairs have brought a sense of unease to our approaching fall season. Though each morning feels like a new mystery, we are all grateful for a large group of people who care about meeting the basic needs of our most vulnerable right now, thank you.

---

### Quick Hits:

- **An Issued Executive Order Lacks Delivery Promise**
- **Pandemic EBT Extended**
- **Dallas County Issues a Food Pantry Program**

---

### Executive Order Attempts to Replace Congressional Action

Frustrated with the lack of progress from the stimulus bills put forth by the Senate and House, the administration took it upon themselves to issue [executive orders to authorize assistance programs](#). However, unfortunately, this act might not be able to provide the assistance it intended.

The Administration's executive order called for four main areas.

- Enhanced Unemployment Benefits
- Payroll Tax Delay (note: Delay)
- Assistance to Homeowners and Renters by Stopping Evictions
- Deferring Student Loan Payments

Though all items could potentially impact food insecure households, here we will discuss the complications of the enhanced unemployment benefits.

This executive memo looks to create a \$400 a week payment to laid-off workers. The previous CARES Act that expired at the end of July, gave laid-off workers \$600 a week. Though stimulus bills, intended to be

the next round of COVID-19 relief have been issued by both the House and the Senate, but are light-years apart in being aligned. Until Congress can come to a compromise, no one is receiving additional unemployment benefits, which prompted the administration to take action.

As a quick reminder, in respect to the additional unemployment benefit payment, the House's HEROES Act, continued the \$600/week payment until the end of January. In the other chamber, the Senate's HEALS Act decreased the payment to \$200 a week through September and then moved it to 70% of previous wages up to \$500. The executive order memo, tried to split the difference to offer \$400 a week in aid.

However, the memo requires states to provide 25% of this payment (\$100), to which many States simply cannot afford while unemployment filings remaining historically high. Additionally, the Executive Office does not have the power to provide appropriations (payments) to current programs directly, that role belongs to Congress.

This executive action, that has left many scratching their heads, lacks the authority and funds to come to life. Many anti-poverty advocates fear that this news will create This payment would require the creation of an entirely new program, which would take months at minimum.

With no boost to SNAP yet, unlikely bonus payments to unemployment benefits, and many small businesses forced with tough decisions ([Paycheck Protection Program expired on Saturday](#)), food insecurity will remain high as households have to make tough decisions.

## **Pandemic EBT is Extended Again, But Fear May Prevent Enrollment**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (aka Phase 2 or FFCRA) created the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program to provide families, who would normally benefit from Free/Reduced Breakfast and Lunch Programs, with financial resources to supplement the food cost when school is not in session. Pandemic EBT is available regardless of immigration status to any student who was receiving free or reduced-price meals at school. For Dallas Independent School District, that means every child, is eligible. [The process is simple and quick](#). Apply online and receive your benefit card in the mail, totaling \$285 per student.

Pandemic EBT is available regardless of immigration status to any student who was receiving free or reduced-price meals at school. For many immigrant families who have been excluded from unemployment assistance and stimulus checks, P-EBT may be the only new resource available to help during this time. We want to remind all advocates that P-EBT is not considered a public benefit under the public charge inadmissibility determination. Please encourage all who may be eligible for this benefit that there is no harm in applying or receiving this benefit.

## **Dallas County Issues Funds to Food Pantries**

Dallas County has created a Food Pantry Assistance Program to provide support to the critical service food pantries are distributing at this time. Fully completed applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis providing up-to \$15,000 in awards. [Learn more here](#).

---

Questions or Comments?

Reply and let me know what you're thinking about all this, love the chat.

**Valerie Stone Hawthorne, PhD**

Director, Government Relations

North Texas Food Bank

**832.851.0303**

[policy@ntfb.org](mailto:policy@ntfb.org)



Don't want these updates any longer? Email [policy@ntfb.org](mailto:policy@ntfb.org) and I'll remove you quickly but remorsefully...