

## Frequently Asked Questions About the Maryland Summer EBT Program

By passing HB183/SB213, Maryland stands poised to make a historic investment in 500,000 children by making sure they have enough to eat during the summer when schools are closed. This significant investment will leverage \$9 million dollars of state funds to draw down \$69 million in federal funds.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### **How did you arrive at the estimated 500,000 eligible children?**

Our estimate is based on current SNAP enrollment, children served by the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (NLSP/SBP), and the number of school children who participated in the recent Pandemic EBT program. This matches the federal government's [estimate](#).

#### **How will families be enrolled? Will they need to apply?**

The state has a strategy to identify and enroll all children in Summer EBT. Our goal is to automatically enroll 90% of eligible children in the program. SNAP and TCA enrolled children of compulsory school age (5 through 17 years) will be automatically enrolled in Summer EBT. Also, children who have applied and are determined eligible for free and reduced price school meals will be enrolled automatically; these two groups do not need to do anything to receive Summer EBT benefits. To reach the remaining 10% of eligible children, DHS and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will conduct an extensive outreach campaign to educate local schools about the program, and we will stand up a simple and seamless application process (in English and Spanish) for those who cannot be automatically enrolled.

#### **What if program costs are more than expected? Would DHS decrease benefits?**

No. Benefit amounts are set by the federal government. As this is a new program, our working cost estimates are subject to change, but we are confident in our projections and will make sure this program is launched in 2024 to ensure that no child is left behind.

#### **How will Summer EBT address the equity issues we saw with Summer SNAP?**

Children in Calvert, Cecil, Dorchester, Garrett, Harford, Saint Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester were unable to participate in Maryland's Summer SNAP program in 2023. Even among the jurisdictions that participated, not all eligible children received Summer SNAP benefits due to funding limitations. The Summer EBT program eliminates the required



local matching funds, making all children eligible, no matter where they live in Maryland. No child will be left behind.

**Why not use some of the money to feed children in December instead?**

Federal Summer EBT funds can only be used to cover benefits for the months of June, July, and August. Although the program doesn't include benefits for the month of December, Summer EBT will reach five times as many children as did the state's Summer SNAP program and provides \$20 more in benefits per child.

**How will the \$18 million in administrative costs be used to support Summer EBT?**

To build on lessons learned from the rollout of the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program, DHS anticipates hiring 137 new workers to successfully manage Summer EBT. DHS will need \$10.8 million to fund and support these workers to successfully administer the program. Other costs include \$4.3 million in contractual charges for issuing benefits, \$300,000 for developing an online application, and \$2.6 million for statewide outreach, unanticipated costs, and MSDE's costs which are being developed. DHS and MSDE will partner and fund community-based organizations to assist with statewide outreach and engagement.

**Could DHS spend less in administrative costs?**

DHS budgeted for Summer EBT based on serving 500,000 children across the entire state. The department needs adequate staff to proactively engage communities, schools, families, and to prevent customer service issues that plagued the Pandemic EBT Program. With appropriate funding, the DHS will determine program eligibility more efficiently, respond to phone calls from parents and guardians, issue EBT cards, and coordinate with MSDE and local school systems to resolve reported issues to ensure timely delivery of benefits.