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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Food Bank prepares for surge as emergency SNAP benefits expire

Nearly 350,000 to lose Emergency SNAP Benefits locally this month

PITTSBURGH, PA (February 14, 2023) Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank is preparing to serve a significantly higher amount of families as Emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as food stamps, expire.

In 2020, Congress approved Emergency SNAP benefits as a response to the pandemic. These benefits provided families with two payments for groceries a month, instead of just one. Due to a change in federal law by Congress, families will no longer receive a second payment for groceries starting in March.

“While we knew these emergency SNAP benefits were temporary and would eventually expire, the loss of the benefits comes at a time when heating bills, inflation and food costs are creating a real hardship for families. This change will exacerbate the already existing strain on Food Banks, but we are confident in our ability to meet the need and support our neighbors facing hunger,” said Food Bank Director of Community Connections and Collaborative Learning Chris West.

With the change, individuals can expect to lose at least **\$95 a month in benefits for groceries**. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services estimates families in the state will lose an average of \$180 per month per household with the change.

“We know families facing food insecurity often have to make extreme choices. We never want someone to have to choose between keeping the heat on, seeing the doctor or having enough food to eat. Through direct distributions, senior boxes, our onsite pantry and more than 1,000 partners in the area, we’re ready to step in and provide relief,” said West.

While the change may be jarring for many, West says Pennsylvania’s SNAP program offers more support than other states. In fact, he says Pennsylvania has increased eligibility for those 59 and under to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. With so many newly eligible, people should reach out to the Food Bank if they think they might qualify for SNAP, and the Food Bank can help with applying right over the phone.

To find food resources close to home or to apply for SNAP, people can visit pittsburghfoodbank.org or call 412-460-3663 x655.