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****Maryland Food Bank Hunger Brief****

Maryland's Food Assistance Network Anticipates Increased Demand for Food Assistance in 2022

BALTIMORE – After almost two years of COVID-19, Marylanders are still experiencing significant hardship as a result of the pandemic, which continues to impact the economy and household budgets. Between rising inflation, supply chain disruptions, and labor shortages caused by surging cases of new COVID-19 variants, the economic recovery remains bumpy, just as federal relief measures wind down.

“The expiration of the expanded child tax credit combined with a wave of new COVID cases that will likely affect the local economy could trigger a significant increase in need for food assistance in 2022, especially as rising prices continue to put a heavy financial burden on Maryland families,” said Carmen Del Guercio, CEO and president of the Maryland Food Bank (MFB).

The food bank expects the pandemic to have a lasting ripple effect well into 2022, in part because of what the organization is hearing from its statewide network of community partners about higher-than-average demand for charitable food. Based on original research conducted in December 2021 before the expiration of expanded child tax credits, 42% of MFB partners surveyed reported an increase in the number of clients visiting their sites over the previous six months. In terms of what to expect going forward, 68% of partners surveyed anticipate an increase in client attendance at their pantries or events in the next six months.

“We’ve been helping our dedicated community partners stay open by providing nutritious, high-quality food at no cost, and we’re concerned about the amount of additional support that will be required as this historically high level of need continues to escalate,” Del Guercio added.

In FY21, more than \$2.1 million in grants was dispersed to MFB Network Partners across Maryland to support COVID-19 response efforts, while over \$28 million was spent on purchased food, a **405% increase** over pre-pandemic levels (when comparing FY21 vs. FY19 numbers). Since March of 2020, the food bank and its food assistance network has distributed enough food to provide nearly 83.7 million meals, a 70% increase over the same period prior to COVID-19.

“As we’ve seen over the last few weeks, this global health crisis is far from over, and its social and economic effects will continue to impact the livelihoods of food-insecure Marylanders for months, if not years to come,” Del Guercio said. “But the food bank will continue to support our network and do whatever it takes to make sure our neighbors in need are fed, well into 2022 and beyond.”

About the Maryland Food Bank

The Maryland Food Bank (MFB) is a nonprofit hunger-relief organization dedicated to feeding people, strengthening communities, and ending hunger for more Marylanders. MFB will continue to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable communities while collaborating with partners to provide resources beyond food and address root causes of hunger so that more Marylanders can become financially stable and thrive. To learn more about the Maryland Food Bank, visit www.mdfoodbank.org.