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

Need for Food Assistance in Maryland Remains at Pandemic Levels

BALTIMORE – Between inflation and the end of government pandemic emergency aid, the need for food assistance in Maryland remains high as the rates of food affordability, financial hardship, and food insufficiency continue to trend upward across all income groups, according to the Maryland Food Bank’s (MFB) recent analysis of the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey.

Most notably, **more than four out of five** Maryland adults receiving SNAP (84%) report financial hardship and difficulty paying their bills, an increase of 9% from last month. Between March and April 2023, food insufficiency among Maryland SNAP recipients also rose from 19% to 28% in all households, and from 23% to 41% in households with children.

Below are additional data points MFB has been tracking related to the impact of inflation on neighbors in need, based on the food bank’s analysis of **April 19** Household Pulse Survey data:

- **Food Affordability: 36% Maryland adults**—more than 1 in 3 families—said their children were sometimes or often not eating enough because food was not affordable. This is nearly 12% higher than last month.
- **Financial Hardship:** The percentage of Marylanders who are finding it difficult to pay for usual household expenses rose from 36% in March to **38%** in April 2023.
- **Food Insufficiency:**
 - In April 2023, 29% Maryland families with incomes below \$35,000 experienced food insufficiency.
 - Food insufficiency rose most drastically for families with incomes of \$35,000-\$50,000 month-over-month, from 33% in March to 56% in April 2023.
 - Families earning incomes of \$50,000-\$70,000 are also feeling the pinch, as food insufficiency increased from 6% in March to 26% in April 2023.

Moreover, results from an informal poll conducted during a recent webinar of MFB community partners indicate that **95% of partners** reported an increase in the number of neighbor visits to their distribution events. They identified high prices (53%) and the end of extra SNAP benefits (34%) as the main reasons for increased neighbor visits.

Google keyword searches for charitable food have also been trending upward, as internet search activity **increased by 15%** from February to April 2023. Meanwhile, the number of food assistance service requests via 2-1-1 have **increased by more than 7%** over the last 90 days.

“For so much of the last three years, Marylanders were able to rely on emergency aid from the government to get through the pandemic, but now that those programs have expired and costs for everything continue to rise, we’re seeing the true prevalence of hunger in our state,” said MFB CEO and President Carmen Del Guercio. “This is why our efforts to address root cause solutions and tackle the deeper issues that cause food insecurity in the first place are so important, and why we will continue to prioritize this work alongside our food distribution goals in the years come.”

About the Maryland Food Bank

The Maryland Food Bank is a nonprofit hunger-relief organization dedicated to feeding people, strengthening communities, and ending hunger for more Marylanders by partnering with local organizations from the western mountains to the Eastern Shore. The food bank's statewide network of food assistance brings enough resources together to provide more than 111,000 meals every day (over 40 million meals annually) to hungry children, seniors, veterans, and hard-working families, meeting the immediate needs of hungry Marylanders while simultaneously working to create pathways out of hunger. To learn more about the Maryland Food Bank, visit www.mdfoodbank.org.

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