



# Equitable Rebuilding from COVID-19: Strengthening Protections for Families

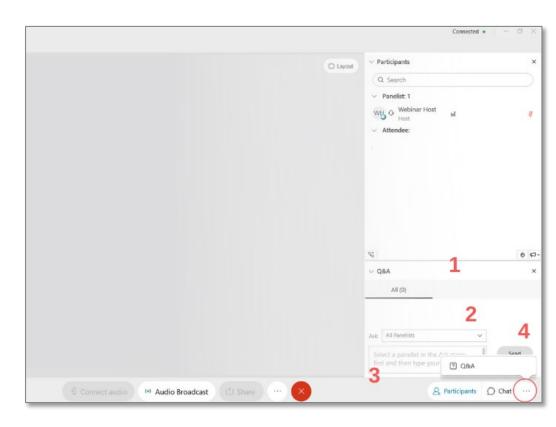
May 27, 2021





#### How to Use WebEx Q & A

- 1. Open the Q&A panel
- 2. Select "All Panelists"
- 3. Type your question
- 4. Click "Send"







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# Leveraging SNAP During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

May 27, 2021

**Mathew Swinburne** 





#### Food Insecurity-Baseline



# **□** Prior to COVID-19 <u>35.2 Million Americans</u> were food insecure (2019).

National Average: 10.5%

White Americans: 7.9%

Hispanic Americans: 15.6%

➤ Black Americans: 19.1%

Native American: 25%

#### ■ Food insecurity increase the risk for:

➤ Coronary heart disease, Stroke, Cancer, Diabetes, Arthritis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease, Obesity, Depression, Suicidal Ideation, Poor academic performance, Impaired cognitive development, . . . .





#### The Challenge of COVID-19

- ☐ An estimated <u>70 million Americans</u> filed for unemployment as a result of the pandemic in 2020.
- ☐ In 2020, an estimated 45-50 million Americans experienced food insecurity.
- 2021 initial projections: 42 million Americans will experience food insecurity.
- Recovery from COVID-19 economic recession not expected until end of 2023.









#### **SNAP: The Largest Nutrition Program**

#### **Number of People**

- ■May 2021- 41.7 million (estimate)
- □FY 2020-39.9 Million
- □FY 2019-35.7 Million (20-year low)

#### **Amount of Funding**

- □ As of May 2021-\$41.2 Billion in Benefits
- □FY 2020- \$74.2 Billion in Benefits
- □FY 2019-\$55.6 Billion in Benefits







#### **Economic Impact of SNAP**

- During a weak economy, every additional SNAP dollar creates an additional \$1.54 in economic activity.
- An additional billion dollars in SNAP funding supports 13,560 jobs.
  - Agriculture, transportation, manufacturing, food service, health care, . . . .





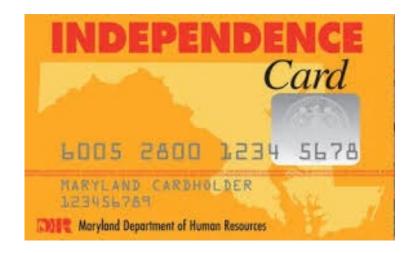




## Measures to Strengthen SNAP: Pandemic and Beyond

1. Increase the value of the SNAP allotment (benefits).

2. Increase the number of people eligible for SNAP.









#### **Increase the Value of the Benefits**

#### Emergency Allotments (FFCRA)

- Normally amount of money is determined by income and number of people in a household.
- Emergency Allotment provision allows states to increase the amount of money given to a SNAP household regardless of income.
- Increase limited to the existing maximum allotment for a household of its size.
  - Example max for a household of 4 is \$680/month\*\*\*\*\*
- ☐ Initial planned for two months (April/May 2020) but USDA has been granting 1-month extensions and plans to continuing to do so as long as states qualify.
  - Federal emergency declaration, state emergency declaration, and data reports.





#### **Initial Problems with the Emergency Allotment**

- Initially ignored households with the lowest incomes because they already receive the maximum allotment—40% of SNAP households.
- Under normal conditions SNAP allotments are inadequate.
- ☐ IOM found that they failed to provide for a minimally adequate diet (failed to keep up with inflation).
- ☐ Food Research Action Center
  - Flawed Thrifty Food Plan: impractical food lists, lacks variety to meet dietary guidelines ignores special dietary needs, unrealistic assumptions regarding food availability and affordability....









#### **Congress Increased the SNAP Allotment Temporarily**

- ☐ Helps families who received no additional support from the Emergency Allotment Provision.
- ☐ Utilized in the past during Great Recession
  - > Temporarily increased the maximum allotment by 13.6%.
  - ➤ Resulted in improved food security, health outcomes, decreased healthcare costs, and promoted economic growth (\$40 billion).
- Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021
  - Increased allotment for all households by 15%
  - ➤ 115% of the value of the thrifty meal plan
  - Slated to sunset June 30, 2021
  - ➤ Maximum for a Family of 4: \$680/month to \$782/month
- ☐ The American Rescue Plan Act, enacted in March 2021, extended this increase through September 2021.
- Better if the increased allotment was earmarked to actual economic recovery rather than a set date.





### **Enhanced Emergency Allotment (EEA)**

- Presidential Executive Order on Economic Relief Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic (January 2021)
  - Directed Federal agencies to consider administrative actions to better address the current economic crisis.
- USDA releases new policy for Enhanced Emergency Allotments (4/1/21).
- ➤ All households to get at least a \$95 increase in benefits from emergency allotments.
  - Maximum for a Family of 4: \$680/month to \$782/month (15%) to \$879/month (EEA)
- ➤ Target lowest income families that were not helped by the original structure of the EA.
- > Policy will continue while the national emergency declaration is in place.
- Also includes a phase-out provision.





## Increasing Eligibility for SNAP





- □ Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD)
  - Requires people 18-49 who can work and do not have dependents to meet special work requirements.
  - FFCRA waived it from April 1,2020 through one month after the termination of the federal public health emergency declaration.
    - Set expiration of COVID waiver to an economic recovery metric.
  - Normally states can secure geographic waivers when there are poor economic conditions and offer individual exemptions.





#### Restrictive ABAWD Regulations Ruled Invalid

- ☐ In 2019, USDA changed ABAWD regulations.
- Estimated to remove 700,000 individuals from SNAP.
- Made it harder for states to qualify for geographic waivers and lessened their ability to grant individual exemptions.
- ☐ District Columbia vs. USDA (October 2020)
  - Struck down the regulations: failed notice and comment procedural requirements, arbitrary and capricious, and contrary to statutory mandate
- □ Decision appealed by the Trump
   Administration, but appeal dropped by the Biden Administration.







#### Repeal Ban on Individuals with Drug Felony Convictions

- Congress created the lifetime ban from SNAP in 1996
  - Disproportionately impacts people of color
  - Undermines food security of families
  - Creates barriers to reintegration
- States can pass legislation opting out of the ban or modifying it.
  - Only SC has full ban in place
  - However, 27 states still have a modified ban.
    - Disqualified after multiple convictions, Requires drug testing, Requires drug treatment, Post conviction/ release ineligibility period,....
- Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act (MORE Act)
  - Would have repealed ban for individuals with cannabis convictions
- President Biden's-America's Family Plan-would remove the ban completely.



#### Thank you for your time

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Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable and At-Risk School Age Children

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# Framework Overview

WHAT?



SO WHAT?



**NOW WHAT?** 









# What?

March 2020: Schools across the country closed to in-person instruction due to COVID-19

On-line instruction was quickly implemented

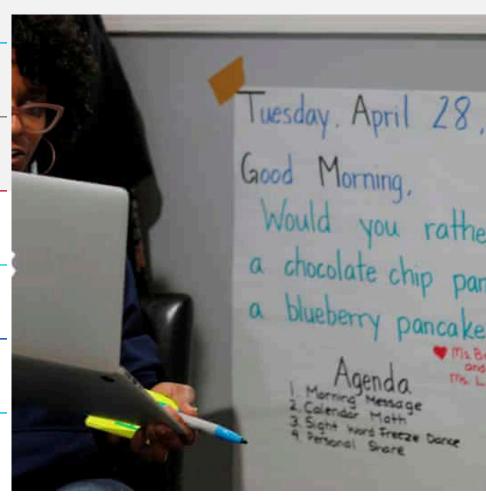
School Districts lacked comprehensive plans

School Districts were under-prepared

Emergency laws/policies not sufficient

Businesses, including bars and restaurants, were prioritized in reopening





CENTER FOR Law, Health & Society

#### SO WHAT?

Education = most modifiable social determinant of health

Significant implications for access to education

Increase in already existing disparities in education

Significant implications for basic services provided by schools, including mental health

Long-term implications of school closures







Students in lowincome communities Students who are racial minorities, particularly black and hispanic

Students with disabilities and special needs

Students who are LGBTQ

**Students in foster care** 

Students experiencing homelessness or parental unemployment

Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)



## **NOW WHAT?**





# **Actions**

**Funding** 

Professional development and training

On-site vaccines and rapid testing

Systems to support academic and SEL needs

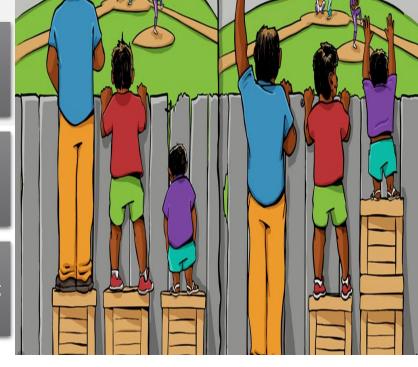
Equitable policies & practices

School-based mental health centers (Project AWARE)

Family engagement

Community partnerships

Long-term strategic planning centering equity





# Federal Funding via Covid-19 relief plans

# How Much Will Congress Spend to Shore Up Schools?

The Covid-19 relief plans before Congress all dedicate billions to stabilizing education budgets amid deep losses in state revenue. But the amounts vary from bill to bill.

FutureEd	CARES Act Signed into Law March 2020	Covid Relief Package Signed into Law December 2020	American Rescue Plan Signed into Law March 2021
Education Total	\$30.7 billion	\$82 billion	\$168 billion
K-12	\$13.2	\$54	\$126
Higher Ed	\$14	\$22	\$40
Governors	\$3	\$4	\$2.7

#### Per Pupil Dollars in Covid Relief Plans

The three Covid-19 relief packages that passed since March 2020 are delivering far more federal money than typically flows to K-12 schools through key federal budget sources.

CARES Act Title I/IDEA (2019-20) CRRSA

American Rescue Plan



\$270 per pupil
Passed March 2020

Obligated by September 2022



\$640 per pupil

Annual allotment



\$1,100 per pupil
Passed Dec. 2020

Obligated by September 2023



**\$2,600** per pupil

Passed March 2021

Obligated by September 2024

Future Eq.

Estimates calculated by Edunomics Lab











# COVID-19 Illuminates Need to Close the Digital Divide

May 27, 2021

**Betsy Lawton** 





#### A Superdeterminant of Health

- » Impacts all social determinants of health
  - ✓ Education
  - ✓ Economic Stability
  - ✓ Neighborhood and Built Environment
  - ✓ Health and Healthcare
  - √ Social and Community Context







"Every American should have affordable access to robust broadband service and the means and skills to subscribe if they so choose."

FCC's 2010 Connecting America: The National Broadband Plan









- Checking the network cables, modem, and router
- Reconnecting to Wi-Fi
- Running Windows Network Diagnostics

DNS\_PROBE\_FINISHED\_NO\_INTERNET









#### **Measuring the Digital Divide**

#### FCC 2019 Fixed Broadband Access and Adoption



Nationwide Access: 95.6%

Urban: 98.8%Rural: 82.7%

• Tribal Lands: 79.1%

• Rural Tribal Lands: 64.5%



**Nationwide Adoption: 69.4%** 

• Urban: 73.3%

• Non-Urban: 64.5%

• Tribal Lands: 46.5%

Non-urban Tribal Lands:40.6%





#### **Disparities in Broadband Access**

#### **Neighborhood Adoption Rates:**

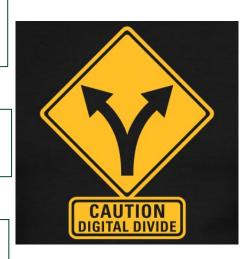
- Black neighborhoods: 67%
- white neighborhoods: 84%

#### **Tribal lands:**

- No access to any fixed broadband: 32%
- Access to only one provider: 36%

#### **Education:**

- 16.9 million children lack home broadband:
- > 30% of Black, Latino & Native American households with schoolaged kids
- Pre-pandemic 21% of Black students used public Wi-Fi to complete homework







#### » COVID- 19 Pandemic:

- Increased need for telehealth and educational access
- Fewer opportunities to utilize broadband at libraries and school buildings
- Economic consequences threaten household ability to continue to pay for service.





#### **Early Efforts**

#### **CARES Act**

- \$13 billion: Education agencies to support remote learning
- \$3 billion: Emergency education relief for states to improve remote learning
- \$200 million: Expand telehealth access
- \$50 million: Institute for Museum & Library Service for digital network access

#### Universal Services Fund

- E-rate: waived gift prohibition & urged providers to offer free mobile hotspots and devices
- Lifeline: eased application requirements and limited unenrollment
- Healthcare Connect Fund: waived gift prohibition
- Connected Care Pilot Program: support telehealth & home broadband for patients

#### Keep America Connected Pledge

- Voluntary commitments to waive late fees, not terminate service, open Wi-Fi hotspots (Expired on June 30, 2020)
- Chairman Pai urged Congress to act to connect "doctors and patients, students and teachers, low-income families and veterans, those who have lost their jobs and livelihoods due to the pandemic and the accompanying lockdowns"





#### **Local Solutions**

#### **Schools**

- Cities (like Chicago) offset cost of home broadband during the school year
- Localities outfit School Buses with Wifi Hotspots
- K-12 Bridge to Broadband Initiative

# Local Broadband

- Arizona law authorizes electric cooperatives to provide broadband service
- Denver referendum to opt the city out of a state law that prevents municipalities from building broadband networks.





#### Was it enough?

#### **Lifeline Subscribers**

- Lifeline subscriber increased from 7.3 million in June 2020 to 9.1 million in April 2021
- 42% of applicants did not qualify for Lifeline benefit due to application errors or insufficient or lacking documentation.
- 27% of eligible households subscribe

#### **Remote Learning**

- State and school district efforts helped, but an estimated 12 million students remain underconnected, and
- many benefits that helped connect disconnected students will expire in the next few years.





#### **What's Missing**

Regulatory Oversight E-rate
Benefit for
Home
Broadband

Increased Lifeline Benefit

Municipal Broadband





#### **Late 2020**

#### **The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021**

short-term programs aimed at eliminating the digital divide, including:

- **Emergency Broadband Benefit:** \$3.2 billion to offset broadband service costs (up to \$50) for low-income households;
- Connecting Minority Communities Pilot: \$285 million to support education and provide broadband service at Tribal and Historically Black Colleges and Universities;
- **Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program:** \$1 billion in grants to Tribal governments to support broadband deployment and affordability programs; and
- Rural broadband infrastructure: \$300 million

(in addition to the \$9.23 billion FCC allocated in December 2020, via it's pre-pandemic Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, for rural broadband infrastructure for 5.2 million rural households and businesses).





#### **Latest Efforts to Bridge Digital Divide**

#### **Executive Order on Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery**

FCC encouraged "to increase connectivity options for students lacking reliable home broadband, so that they can continue to learn if their schools are operating remotely."

#### E-rate funding for home broadband

- FCC seek public comments on petitions seeking approval to use E-rate funds to be used for off-campus access to broadband services for students who lack home internet access
- American Rescue Plan Act: \$7.1 billion to support remote learning through the E-rate program, can be used to purchase home broadband service for disconnected remote learners. Available until one year after the COVID-19 emergency ends.

#### American Jobs Plan Proposal (in negotiations)

- Proposes \$100 billion to build broadband networks: 100% coverage goal, prioritize government, non-profit and cooperative networks
- Aims to move from long-term subsidies to promoting more affordable internet: increase competition, reduce barriers for municipal owned networks, and transparency in pricing.





#### **Actions for Change**

Leverage Affordability	Allow E-rate funds to support offsite (home) broadband		
Programs	Increase Lifeline discount to \$50		
FCC Oversight	Restore common carrier status, or		
	Other oversight mechanism that allows FCC to move beyond voluntary response		
Municipal Broadband			
•	beyond voluntary response  Support broadband provided by local public utilities, non-		



#### Thank you for your time

Betsy Lawton
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Please feel free to send me an e-mail with any additional questions!

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**COVID Illustrates Need to Close the Digital Divide: Part II (February 2021)** 

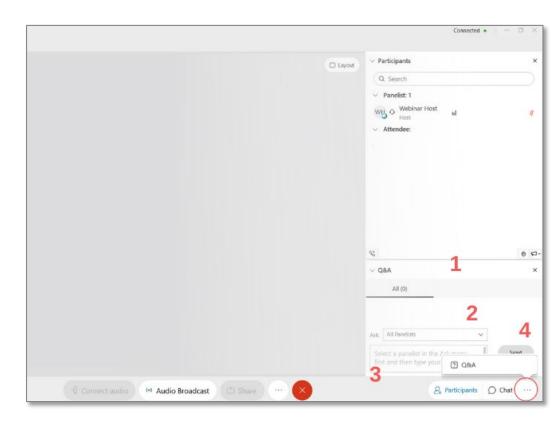
**COVID-19 Illustrates Need to Close the Digital Divide (July 2020)** 





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#### **Upcoming Webinar:**

Equitable Rebuilding from COVID-19: Strengthening Protections for Communities 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. ET, June 22, 2021

#### **Upcoming Events:**

**2021 Public Health Law Conference: Building and Supporting Healthy Communities for All**September 21 – 23, 2021 | Baltimore, MD

