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Illinois Commission to End Hunger applauds passage of SB 1847

Statewide anti-hunger legislation signed into law on Tuesday will expand SNAP/Food Stamp access for struggling people in Illinois

CHICAGO – The Illinois Commission to End Hunger – a statewide group of public and private partners working to measurably reduce hunger in Illinois – applauds the passage of SB 1847 on Tuesday. The bill, signed into law by Governor Bruce Rauner, will increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit access for struggling individuals and families across Illinois. More than 1.75 million people in Illinois are food insecure, meaning they regularly experience uncertain or limited access to food.

SB 1847 exercises the State of Illinois' right to expand eligibility for federally-funded SNAP benefits by raising the gross income limit from 130% to 165% of the Federal Poverty Level. This change will enable an additional 40,000 households across Illinois to receive benefits from the anti-hunger program formerly known as Food Stamps. This also means that up to \$60 million in federal benefits will be available for Illinois SNAP recipients to spend at local food retailers. The law takes effect on January 1, 2016.

"The Illinois Commission to End Hunger is excited by the difference this will make for thousands of individuals and families across the state," said Kate Maehr, Commission Co-Chair and Executive Director for the Greater Chicago Food Depository. "The biggest difference will be for working households who currently earn too much income to qualify for SNAP, but not enough income to purchase all of the food they need."

The development and passage of SB 1847 was a priority for the Illinois Commission to End Hunger's Benefits Access Workgroup, led by Dan Lesser of Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law and Kathy Chan of Cook County Health and Hospital System. With bipartisan support, the bill passed the Illinois Senate on April 23 and the Illinois House of Representatives on May 29.

"This bill will allow 40,000 working families to put adequate and nutritious food on the table," said Dan Lesser, Co-Chair of the Commission's Benefits Access Workgroup and Director for Economic Justice at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. "We are grateful for the bipartisan support that made this critical anti-hunger initiative possible."

Approximately 2 million people in Illinois currently receive SNAP benefits. But many working families are just above the income limit for SNAP. Currently, a family of three must earn less than \$2,144 per month to qualify for SNAP benefits. Under the new law, a family of three earning less than \$2,722 per month could be eligible.

SNAP is a federal nutrition program of the United States Department of Agriculture, administered locally by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

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About the Illinois Commission to End Hunger

Created by legislation in 2010, the Commission to End Hunger was appointed with the mission of developing a plan to end hunger in Illinois. The purpose of the Commission to End Hunger is to develop an action plan, review the progress of this plan, and ensure cross-collaboration among government entities and community partners toward the goal of ending hunger in Illinois.

The Commission established three working groups: No Kid Hungry, Benefits Access and Emergency Food System to explore the challenges of and potential solutions for combating hunger in Illinois. For more information about the Commission, visit www.endhunger.illinois.gov.