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More Than 1 in 5 PA Households with Children Can't Afford Enough Food

New Report Shows Widespread Struggle in Every Congressional District in the Commonwealth, Underscoring Need to Protect Nutrition Safety Net

Harrisburg – August 11, 2011 – More than 1 in 5 Pennsylvania households with children struggle to afford enough food, according to a new report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). This figure is even more alarming in the Commonwealth's First Congressional District, where nearly half of all households with children face food hardship. The First District, represented by U.S. Rep. Bob Brady, includes South Philadelphia, parts of Central and North Philadelphia, the city of Chester and other portions of Delaware County. Of the nation's 436 Congressional districts, the First District ranks second-worst among households with children. Four other Pennsylvania districts have more than 1 in 4 such households reporting food hardships. (See chart below.)

"This report not only shows that hunger touches *every* community, but that children are far too often its victim. We all know and believe that children are the future of our nation. But how can we expect them to learn and grow—to become that future—on empty stomachs?" asks Laura Tobin Goddard, Interim Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. "The answer is we can't, which is why Congress needs to realize now is not the time to be weakening America's safety net—even in the name of deficit reduction. As more and more families struggle with hunger, Congress must protect SNAP (food stamps), WIC, school meals, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, and other nutrition programs that help these families put food on their tables."

FRAC's *Food Hardship in America* series analyzes data that were collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. The data were gathered as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed more than one million households since January 2008. FRAC has analyzed responses to the question: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?" In the U.S., 18 percent of all households polled responded yes. In households with children, that figure is greater than 23 percent.

"These data merely underscore what every Member of Congress should know already -- that his or her district has tens of thousands of households struggling with hunger or food insecurity," said FRAC President Jim Weill. "Weakening any of these key safety net programs will make hunger and malnutrition more common and deeper. It will increase fiscal deficits, further weaken the economy, and increase human suffering in the district."

The full analysis is available on FRAC's website (www.frac.org).

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***The following table lists food hardship rates for every Congressional District in Pennsylvania. The table also shows how Congressional representatives voted on U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan’s House Budget plan that slashes SNAP (food stamps) and other vital nutrition programs for families.**

Food Hardship Rates for Every Congressional District in Pennsylvania		
Representative	Vote on Ryan Budget Plan that Cuts Nutrition Programs	Food Hardship Rate 2008-2010
Robert A. Brady	No	49.6
Chaka Fattah	No	32.2
Mike Kelly	Yes	26.3
Jason Altmire	No	18.9
Glenn Thompson	Yes	24.8
Jim Gerlach	Yes	14.7
Patrick Meehan	Yes	15.0
Michael Fitzpatrick	Yes	11.9
Bill Shuster	Yes	21.2
Tom Marino	Yes	22.4
Lou Barletta	Yes	26.0
Mark Critz	No	22.7
Allyson Schwartz	No	14.6
Michael Doyle	No	25.4
Charles Dent	Yes	21.6
Joseph Pitts	Yes	18.1
Tim Holden	No	19.7
Tim Murphy	Yes	17.5
Todd Russell Platts	Yes	19.6

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About This Report

This report is the latest in the Food Research and Action Center’s (FRAC) series of analyses of survey data on food hardship collected by Gallup as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. It provides the most up-to-date examination of the struggle that very large numbers of American households are having affording enough food.

About the PA Hunger Action Center

As the statewide leader in anti-hunger advocacy for more than thirty-three years, the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center works every day for the day when all Pennsylvanians will have access to enough nutritious food for an active and healthy life. Beyond federal and state advocacy around food and nutrition programs, Hunger Action provides Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program) outreach, as well as School Breakfast and Summer Food outreach. For more information, please visit our website at www.pahunger.org.