



208 North Third Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Telephone: (717) 233-6705
Fax: (717) 231-4085
Email: info@pahunger.org
Web: www.pahunger.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Joseph Quattrocchi (717) 233-6706

New Survey Finds 15.9 Percent of Households in Pennsylvania Unable to Afford Enough Food in 2009

Report Exposes Broad Hunger and Provides First-Ever Food Hardship Data for Every State, the Top 100 Large Cities and Every Congressional District

HARRISBURG – January 26, 2010 – More than 15.9 percent of households in Pennsylvania reported in 2009 not having enough money to buy food that they needed during the prior twelve months for themselves or their family, according to a new report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

For the first time, data on food hardship – the inability to afford enough food – is available for every state, every Congressional District and for 100 of the country’s largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). In Pennsylvania, each of the 19 Congressional Districts had more than one in ten residents reporting food hardship in 2008-2009. For households with children, it was reported that 22.4 percent reported food hardship.

“These new data reaffirm what we’re seeing in our local communities and provides a current, on-the-ground look at how pervasive households’ struggle with hunger have become in today’s economy,” said Joseph Quattrocchi, the executive director of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. “These findings increase the drumbeat that more must be done, and quickly, to help this state’s and this nation’s struggling families.”

The report analyzes survey data that were collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. The ability to provide such localized data and such up-to-date data comes from Gallup’s partnership with Healthways, interviewing 1,000 households per day almost every day since January 2, 2008 as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project. Through December 2009, more than 650,000 people have been asked a series of questions on a range of topics including emotional health, physical health, healthy behavior, work environment and access to basic services. Specific to this report, more than 530,000 people were asked whether there were times over the preceding year that they did not have enough money to buy food they or their family needed.

The Gallup survey question on food hardship is very similar to one posed by the Census Bureau and analyzed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its official measure of food insecurity, but because of sample size Gallup provides us with a closer, more localized and more recent look at food hardship. Official government data on food insecurity have a nearly one-year time lag and do not go below the state level.

“The data in this report show that food hardship – running out of money to buy the food that families need – is truly a national problem. It is a national problem in the sense that the rate for the nation is so high,” said Jim Weill, president of FRAC. “And it is a national problem in the sense that rates are high in virtually every state, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and Congressional District.”

These new numbers are especially relevant as Congress looks at jobs legislation and other strategies to mitigate the damage of the recession, and reauthorizes child nutrition legislation this year. The Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center has joined FRAC in calling for improvements in a range of federal nutrition programs, including SNAP/ Food Stamps and child nutrition programs, and for more efforts to boost the economy, create more well-paying jobs and reduce unemployment.

“President Obama has set a goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015,” Mr. Quattrocchi said. “As we can see with these new data, the struggle with hunger is a serious problem here in Pennsylvania for children and adults. Not a minute can be wasted between now and 2015 if we’re to reach that goal. All corners of government, the private sector and nonprofits must work together in order to implement long-term strategies that will battle our nation’s hunger crisis.”

The full report is available at www.frac.org.

About the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center

As the statewide leader in anti-hunger advocacy for more than thirty 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 Feeding outreach. For more information, please visit our website at www.pahunger.org.

###