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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center Issues Call for Action to Improve PA's Summer Nutrition Programs Participation**

**Harrisburg, PA** – June 7, 2011. Participation in Summer Nutrition Programs continues to miss many low-income children in the Commonwealth, with less than 129,000 low-income children receiving summer meals in July 2010, according to a new national report released today. PA Hunger Action Center noted that even though participation increased 2.5 percent from the previous July, the program reached less than 24 children for every 100 low-income children who got regular school year school meals.

PA Hunger Action Center issued a call for action in the state to ensure that more low-income children get nutritious summer meals – both this summer and the next.

The commonwealth's performance was better than the national rate, which reaches only one in seven eligible low-income children, according to *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, an annual analysis by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). The FRAC report measures national and state trends in summer nutrition and compares states by determining for each the number of low-income children receiving summer food compared to the number of such children who receive regular school year lunch.

While participation in Pennsylvania increased by 2.5 percent, Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center noted that still far too few children benefited from summer meals. "We can build on these efforts so that Pennsylvania can do a better job in reaching more needy children," said Laura Tobin Goddard, Interim Executive Director for the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. "This is a time for action, and we are calling on everyone in the state to play their part to increase summer food participation."

**ADD A LINE HERE IF YOU WANT TO SPECIFY AN ACTION LISTED IN THE REPORT (URGE STATE AGENCY TO RECRUIT MORE SITES/SPONSORS, STATE MANDATES, ETC.)**

Low participation means missed meals for children and missed dollars for the state. If the Commonwealth were to reach 40 children with summer food for every 100 low-income children who get school lunch during the regular school year, an attainable goal, Pennsylvania would have fed 88,903 more children every day in July 2010 and brought in \$5,964,933 more federal dollars to do so.

"There is an opportunity for all stakeholders to make a difference in participation and ensure that more children can access summer meals," said Jim Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center. "The Summer Nutrition Programs are a vital part of our nation's nutrition safety net. There is a foundation on

which we can build and which we cannot afford to weaken further. From the federal level to the state and local levels, we must make access to Summer Nutrition a top priority.”

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is helping lead the charge with the first-ever *National Summer Food Service Program Week: "Food That's In, When School Is Out."* This week-long campaign (June 6-10) aims to raise awareness about the risk of hunger low-income children face during the summer months and the benefits of summer food.

The Summer Nutrition Programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program, fill the food gap for the thousands of low-income Pennsylvania's children who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year to help keep hunger at bay. Through these programs, children, aged 18 and under, can receive free meals at participating summer sites at schools, parks, other public agencies, and nonprofits. In Pennsylvania, families can find nearby summer meal sites by contacting the PA Department of Education at 1-800-331-0129, ext. 537637.

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**About the report:**

Data for Pennsylvania came from an annual report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a national anti-hunger advocacy and research group. The FRAC report, *Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation*, gives data for all states and looks at national trends. The report measures participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs by comparing the number of low-income children receiving summer meals to the number of low-income children receiving school lunch during the regular school year. FRAC measures national summer participation during the month of July, when typically all children are out of school throughout the month and lose access to school meals. The report is available online at [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).

**About PA Hunger Action Center**

As the statewide leader in anti-hunger advocacy for more than thirty-two 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](http://www.pahunger.org).