



August 2, 2023

The Honorable Governor Brad Little  
Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield  
Director of Idaho Health and Welfare Dave Jeppesen

Dear Gov. Little, Superintendent Critchfield, and Director Jeppesen,

We are writing to express our disappointment and frustration with the state of Idaho's decision to forgo a significant and vital source of federal funding to support about 123,000 low-income Idaho students through food assistance and the summer Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program.

The Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger (IIRAH, [www.iirah.org](http://www.iirah.org)) is a non-profit comprised of over 30 Idaho entities from across the state, including Christian, Muslim, and Jewish congregations and other organizations. We educate the public, inform policy-makers and advocate for needed change. Our vision is to ensure sufficient healthy food for all Idahoans. Given the breadth of our work and the diversity of our membership, we believe IIRAH can offer significant assistance to the state as agencies address Idaho's nutrition scarcity and hunger issues.

Opting out of participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture program has the unfortunate impact of short-changing our school children and their food security needs. Had Idaho chosen to participate in the P-EBT program, it would have benefitted 123,000 children and brought \$15 million into local economies, supported local agriculture and farmers markets, and provided additional revenue to Idaho farmers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, food insecurity long ago reached crisis proportions for Idahoans, including children, and the number of Idahoans who did not have enough food over a one-week period rose 51 percent between October 2021 and June 2023.

Given the availability of federal administrative funds to manage the P-EBT program, and given the favorable condition of Idaho's state budget, this is inexcusable. And Idaho's historic reluctance to accept many forms of federal funds, except for such things as transportation infrastructure, is no excuse for having our school children shoulder the state's political decisions. Thus, we believe that state decision-makers did not provide an adequate explanation for this decision.

IIRAH requests that the Governor's Office, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Welfare reconsider and rectify this ill-advised opt-out of the P-EBT program. We stand ready and eager to work with your offices to ensure Idaho's participation in this vital program in 2024.

Respectfully,

Gayle Woods, Chair, Board of Conveners  
Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger