

**Department of Human Services
Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Senator Melony Ghee Griffith
Friday, February 26, 2021**

**House Appropriations Committee
Health and Social Services Subcommittee
Delegate Kirill Reznik
Friday, February 26, 2021**

Testimony of Secretary Lourdes R. Padilla

Good afternoon, Chairman Griffith, Chairman Reznik, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department's budget request for our Family Investment Administration (FIA). With me today are the Deputy Secretary for Programs, Netsanet Kibret; the Executive Director of the Family Investment Administration, La Sherra Ayala; and the Department's Chief Financial Officer, Stafford Chipungu.

FIA is responsible for administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP), Public Assistance to Adults (PAA), and the Office of Home Energy Assistance (OHEP) programs. FIA is also responsible for determining eligibility for the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and non-Modified Adjusted Gross Income (non-MAGI) Medical Assistance program. FIA also provides emergency services, such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), emergency housing related services for families with minor children, and services related to resettling refugees and asylees.



The Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Allowance for FIA totals \$1,688,189,938, approximately \$372,792,066 more than the current year's working budget. This increase is primarily due to a recent surge in the caseload for Maryland's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). Benefits for the SNAP program are 100 percent federally funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Program Operations During COVID-19

With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting lives across the State, our work has never been more critical. The Department's Family Investment Administration now serves over 600,000 more individuals who are recipients of safety net programs compared to pre-pandemic caseload levels. This represents a 61% increase in the number of cases served. We manage over 1.5 million cases across all FIA programs.

Recovery for the Economy, Livelihoods, Industries, Entrepreneurs, and Families (RELIEF Act of 2021)

On February 15, 2021, Governor Hogan signed into law the RELIEF Act of 2021. The act provided additional funding to further support individuals enrolled in the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP). The law also provides \$10 million in funding to support emergency food programs across the State. \$83 million is also dedicated to energy arrearage assistance. FIA is honored to implement these life changing programs.

- As a result of the RELIEF Act, effective February 1, 2021, through June 30, 2021, each active TDAP recipient will receive a monthly amount of \$100 in addition to the regular benefit amount. Effective immediately, all TDAP cases that closed on or after July 1, 2020, will be reinstated retroactively to the date of closure with the exception of specific



closure reasons. With the exception of specific closure reasons, no cases shall close before July 1, 2021.

- The newly signed Maryland RELIEF Act allocates an additional \$10 million for emergency food assistance. The funding will be awarded to the Maryland Food Bank and the Capital Area Food Bank who will allocate funding to other participating food pantries to support the distribution of TEFAP food commodities.
- The RELIEF Act requires the Maryland Public Service Commission to administer the \$83 million dedicated to arrearage assistance. The \$83 million in funds is provided through the following sources - \$30 million from the “Recovery Now Fund”; \$30 million from the unappropriated funds in the Strategic Energy Investment Fund; and \$23 million from Washington Gas/AltaGas merger funds in the Strategic Energy Investment Fund. The Commission is likely to establish a proposal process for utilities with input from DHS’s Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP).

COVID-19 Programs and Initiatives

I would like to highlight several programs and initiatives that we have implemented to increase resources available to Marylanders in need during this challenging time.

- Since March, the department implemented Pandemic EBT - providing \$220 million in benefits to more than 450,000 children who were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals due to COVID-19. This program will continue through September 2021. We estimate that an additional \$450 million in benefits will be issued.
- We implemented the Emergency Allotment provision as part of the SNAP program, resulting in over \$362 million in additional benefits provided to active SNAP recipients. Emergency



Allotments allow SNAP recipients to receive the maximum benefit for their household size regardless of the income received. Emergency Allotments provide benefit supplements to households with children and elderly adults who are missing meals normally served at school or day programs.

- We collaborated with local food banks to distribute over \$30 million dollars worth of emergency food assistance.
- In the months of May and June, we collaborated with the Maryland Food Bank and Capital Area Food Bank to distribute 200,000 pounds of commodities to more individuals experiencing economic hardship - nearly 17,000 households were served through the Disaster Household Distribution Program.
- We successfully collaborated with vendors to create new models of service to ensure that customers continued to receive employment services like occupational training, English as a second language training, job placement services, and resource referrals in remote environments.
- On December 17, 2020, Governor Hogan announced \$40 million in funding to boost TCA benefits. We are excited and honored to implement this initiative. Starting in the month of January, TCA households received an additional \$100 per recipient per month, which is being added to their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The benefit will continue until June.
- We successfully implemented a congressionally approved increase in SNAP benefits. The fifteen percent increase was a result of a provision in the Consolidated Appropriations Act signed by the President on December 27, 2020. Within two days, DHS made the computer



system changes necessary to ensure that these new benefits were available to customers on their regular SNAP issuance schedule starting in January. This increase will remain in place until June 30, 2021.

- In collaboration with our federal partners, we established interim policies suspending certain policies to cope with increased caseloads. Among many measures, we postponed redeterminations, suspended interview requirements, waived Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) work requirements, and implemented a more accommodating TCA work requirement policy.
- Current waivers are based on flexibilities granted to states through various COVID-19 federal legislation. The federal Continuing Appropriations Act allowed Maryland to institute a six-month extension on the following waivers: SNAP redeterminations, interview requirements, and quality control waivers. These waivers will expire on June 30, 2021. DHS has proactively requested a six-month extension beyond June 30, 2021 for all current Maryland SNAP waivers. DHS will continue to pursue waivers when authorized by the USDA and/or under federal laws and regulations.

Statewide Process Management

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, DHS remained committed to ensuring Marylanders had access to safety net programs. To address the 496% increase in application intake in April, the Department transitioned to a Statewide Process Management (SPM) model. SPM is a centralized system of processing public assistance program applications. The goals of SPM include effectuating no-wrong door principles, reducing eligibility decision timelines, and providing G.O.L.D. Standard customer service across the state. With a 48% increase in SNAP approvals between FY 2020 and FY 2021, and the ability to determine eligibility for over



460,000 applications since the pandemic began to date, it is evident that the implementation of SPM provided efficient processes for completion, accuracy, and consistency in productivity.

Additionally, DHS extended SNAP certification periods of recipients affording the administration the opportunity to prioritize processing the increased number of new applications. The Department relaxed procedural interviewing standards to observe social distancing to protect our constituents.

We established workgroups that include headquarters and local department staff to find areas where we can improve our processes. In addition, we developed an outreach strategy to support our efforts to encourage customers to submit redetermination documents earlier -providing more time to work on the large volumes of determinations due in April through July. On February 24, 2021, we implemented a new function, Redeterminations, in the customer facing portal of myDHR. This function will allow customers to submit a redetermination application and supporting documentation online at any time during the day or night. Customers will also have the ability to review and print a copy of the redetermination packet prior to submission. Once submitted, the redetermination application and supporting documentation will be automatically uploaded into the Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS).

SNAP Outreach

DHS conducts ongoing outreach to ensure that Marylanders know about the SNAP program in case they ever need to access the program. DHS partners with 19 SNAP Outreach partners in various locations throughout the state. The Outreach partners provide support with SNAP applications and ensure recipients maintain eligibility. DHS and SNAP Outreach partners meet monthly to review policy and waiver updates, discuss concerns, and areas of needed improvement. We are pleased to report that USDA approved our request for \$5.4 million for



statewide outreach efforts for FFY 2021. This is a 16.9% increase from the amount budgeted for outreach in FFY 2020. The additional federal funds will allow the State to maintain the partnerships with community-based organizations and expand outreach efforts to previously underserved communities.

SNAP Outreach Meetings

The Department currently works with 19 SNAP Outreach Partners that are authorized to assist SNAP applicants as they apply for benefits by phone. During the period of April-September 2020, the SNAP Outreach Partners provided support to a total of 173,059 callers, screened more than 52,000 households for SNAP eligibility and submitted 13,675 SNAP applications on behalf of Marylanders.

- This is a function that only USDA authorized partners can carry out.
- This is especially important given the limitations that some of our fellow Marylanders face in applying for benefits online.

The Department convened weekly SNAP Outreach Partner calls on Thursdays during the months of March through July, in addition to standing monthly meetings to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our SNAP population. In the months of July through December the weekly meetings were transitioned to bi-weekly and have since returned to meeting monthly. There are an average of 75 participants on the SNAP Outreach Partner calls.

Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) Outreach

The Office of Home Energy Programs continues to drive robust outreach to utility customers facing termination of service and continues to enhance communication with utilities about the status of these efforts. A critical activity in recent months has been intense direct outreach to



those receiving termination notices from their utility companies. Resulting from a request made by OHEP in Public Conference 53, Maryland utilities confirmed on September 10, 2020, that they would provide OHEP with a listing of customers that receive a disconnection notice to allow OHEP to perform outreach and assess the scale of the need for energy assistance in each service territory. These lists have proven valuable to connect directly with those households facing a challenging financial burden. To date, OHEP has reached over 500,000 of these customers and continues to use direct mail, email, and phone calls to make these customers aware of their energy assistance options.

Customer Assistance and Communications

The Department also maintains a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on our website for public consumption. That document speaks to many of the topics we have covered today, and includes telephone numbers for our Call Center for general inquiries, as well as for our SNAP Outreach Partners for assistance with submitting applications.

In response to the pandemic, our DHS Call Center onboarded 40 new staff to address the increased volume; messaging was also added to enhance the customer experience and drive traffic to our myDHR online eligibility portal. In addition, we have significantly increased the utilization of our social media platform to ensure new policy and procedural information is shared with the general public in a timely manner.

Our multi-prong customer communication strategy now includes new tools such as mass email, texting capability, and social media platforms. These tools will allow us to reach customers faster - ensuring that customers have access to the information that impacts their benefits in real-time.

P-EBT Continuing

DHS, in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), successfully



issued Spring and limited September P-EBT benefits to eligible households. Maryland was one of few states which secured approval to issue September P-EBT benefits. Following federal guidance, Maryland's new P-EBT Plan, which covers issuing benefits for October 2020 through September 2021 is in the review process with state and federal partners. DHS amended its plan to include children under the age of six who are now eligible based on the childcare eligibility provision enacted in the Continuing Appropriations Act. Under this provision, a child under the age of six is eligible for P-EBT if she or he is a member of a SNAP household and lives in an area where a school or a childcare facility is operating at reduced capacity due to COVID-19. We have determined that all children under the age of six who are on SNAP are eligible under this provision - this impacts approximately eighty thousand children. Following federal approval, the Department will move forward with issuing subsequent P-EBT benefits.

The federal government has also recently increased the daily P-EBT rate from \$5.86 to \$6.82 . Because the increase is retroactive to the beginning of the current school year, DHS will issue underpayments to the children who have received their September benefits. DHS has secured \$220 million in P-EBT benefits for Maryland's children, with a total of \$196.1 million of which 88.8% have been expended to date. We expect \$450 million in additional benefits will be issued between now and September 30th.

Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) Payments

Maryland determines its TCA benefit amounts by calculating the State Minimum Living Level (MLL); Maryland law requires that the combined TCA and SNAP benefit equal 61% of the MLL. Using the required MLL formula, TCA households would have realized a decrease of 3.4% in benefits in FFY 2021. DHS opted to maintain FFY 2020 benefit levels for FFY 2021 in



the spirit of preventing the negative impact a decrease in benefits would cause families that depend on TCA to cover basic expenses.

Jobs for Temporary Cash Assistance Recipients

DHS is committed to helping TCA recipients find jobs with sustainable wages so that they are able to meet basic household needs independent of public assistance. For the fourth consecutive year, our dedication to the removal of barriers and to expanding partnerships has allowed DHS to secure 7,276 jobs for our TCA-related customers. This was achieved despite a global pandemic. The continued achievements in job placements during a time of economic uncertainty and the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 public health crisis highlights the continued focus on in-depth customer assessments, expanded community partnerships, and opportunities for career pathways. DHS committed to placing “people before performance” by ensuring TCA recipients were provided with the needed tools (including but not limited to broadband internet, laptops, tablets, etc.) to participate in virtual learning and employment. With a combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (WIOA/TANF) plan, DHS continues to work with the Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland State Department of Education, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services to continue to address the needs of low-income individuals enrolled in TCA and other public assistance programs. These partnerships proved integral to the success in keeping TCA recipients connected to virtual learning and job training opportunities and improved customer experience during unprecedented times.

Life On Welfare - TCA Before and During COVID-19

In a recent University of Maryland School of Social Work report on Life on Welfare with TCA recipients before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic, several findings indicate the families



served in the pandemic are not traditional TCA households.

The report reveals several findings:

- The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a 43% spike in TCA cases during the initial three months of the crisis.
- Two in five families in the pandemic cohort had never received TCA. However, a majority (65%) of these new TCA families were prior SNAP recipients.
- Two-thirds (67%) of pre-pandemic families continued to receive TCA throughout the initial three months of the pandemic.
- Adult recipients were slightly more likely to have education beyond high school which may have played a role in their higher earnings.
- Even though adults in both cohorts (about one in four adults) worked in low-wage industries that were hit hard by the pandemic, such as restaurants and retail, adults in the pandemic cohort nearly always earned more than pre-pandemic adults when working in the same industry.

Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) Payments

The Governor's Allowance for FY 2021 increases the monthly benefit for TDAP recipients by 6.8 percent. Effective July 1, 2020, TDAP recipients saw monthly benefits increase from \$215 to \$243. TDAP recipients will continue to see increases in their benefit allotment with an increase to \$256 to take effect July 1, 2021. During Fiscal Year 2020, the TDAP caseload increased as a result of the continued enhancement to program integrity efforts. The monthly annual average caseload has increased by 3% during the past two years as a result, from 12,508 in SFY 2019 to 12,929 in SFY 2020. Overall expenditures increased by 13% during the same time. Caseloads



grew mainly due to the increased need during the earlier months of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

DHS made policy decisions which allowed individuals in need to access this benefit with less barriers and administrative burden typically seen in pre-COVID times. The Department examined three key areas to understand what impacts the public health emergency has had on the State's TDAP recipients. We looked at application approval rates, case closure rates, and trends in application denial reasons. Informed by clear trends, the Department identified policy and procedural impacts on the caseload as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Department noticed an increase in case closures, there was also a corresponding decrease in application approval rates. DHS has made significant changes in the application processes and procedures to allow for contactless transactions.

Effective February 19, 2021, FIA is accepting self-attestation to verify disability status. In order to relieve vulnerable customers of the administrative burdens during this crisis, DHS is considering any individual who marks themselves as disabled on their application as meeting the disability criteria for TDAP. While these changes have ultimately enhanced service delivery, there still remains regulatory and statutory requirements that were written for pre-pandemic times. TDAP customers are often our most vulnerable customers who are exceptionally sensitive to changes limiting in-person contact. DHS also moved expeditiously to make the decision to reopen any recipient's TDAP case that closed as a result of failure to provide verification or recertify benefits during the months of July 2020 - November 2020. Prior to the RELIEF Act passing, DHS had already reopened approximately 3,000 TDAP cases of the 7,000 cases that are now eligible for reopening. Additionally, to prevent any additional case closures through June



30, 2021, DHS has suspended any system closure to TDAP changes including extending any case due for redetermination on or before June 30, 2021, for 6 months.

The newly signed RELIEF Act also allocates an additional \$100 monthly TDAP benefit for recipients. DHS is proud to report that this benefit was effectuated immediately and all current TDAP recipients, including those being reopened, have already received their first \$100 benefit and will receive the additional benefit on their typical TDAP benefit issuance date. Through the RELIEF Act, the Department is reopening about 6,000 additional TDAP cases and has implemented the \$100 additional TDAP benefit for TDAP recipients for the months of February 2021 through June 2021.

We also centralized the processing of federal disability payments so that DHS (instead of the local offices) receives reimbursement for TDAP case payments from the lump-sum disability checks once the customer is approved. During SFY 2020, we received over \$4.8 million in reimbursement payments. However, DHS will not be recouping the additional \$100 benefit provided to recipients through June 30, 2021.

The Department continues to assist the long-term disabled TDAP customers with completing their applications through the Disability Benefits Advocacy (DBA) program. Long-term disabled TDAP customers are assisted in filing federal disability claims and any subsequent appeals. If the federal disability claim is approved, the customer is no longer eligible for TDAP benefits, but will receive a higher federal benefit amount. DHS conducts regular meetings and check-ins with the vendor to ensure customers are able to access services with limited in-person availability. The vendor for the DBA program has been successfully providing this service in a remote setting since the onset of the public health crisis in March 2020.



Workforce Development Employment and Training Programs Expansion

In collaboration with Maryland's Statewide Workforce Development System, DHS has further expanded available work opportunities for individuals receiving food assistance from 16 community partners to 29 through the SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. SNAP E&T is designed to assist SNAP recipients to develop in-demand job skills that lead to stable employment. Further, DHS and the 24 Local Department of Social Services (LDSSs) offices implementing Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) policy work requirements have cultivated partnerships with their local workforce development partners and will continue to work closely with them in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021.

We continue to expand SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) programs in order to increase training opportunities for all employable individuals on SNAP. The program has grown to 29 partners with a budget of \$20 million for FFY 2021.

DHS continues to focus on strengthening the existing program infrastructure through support and technical assistance to SNAP E&T partners and leveraging the agency-wide stakeholders to elicit the interest of additional third-party partners. During the upcoming fiscal year, we will establish and execute new processes for conducting outreach to expand the third-party partner network, streamline the referral of ABAWDs from LDSS offices to SNAP E&T programs, monitor contracts, and provide ongoing technical assistance to partners. With improved program infrastructure, DHS is increasing its capacity to encourage SNAP recipients to participate in work activities.

Conclusion

We continue to innovate and adapt our model of service delivery to meet customer needs. Lastly,



the Department is committed to preparations to support our customers as they navigate the post-pandemic world in which the economic landscape, the way we work, and so much more will look different.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you again for having me here today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



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Response to Issues

Issue#1: DLS recommends reducing the budget of DHS by \$950,000 to reflect the funds that were required to revert but were not reverted. (Page 9).

Response to Issue: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Issue #2: DHS should comment on how it could support a return to more typical employment and training activities for TCA recipients, given the TANF-related constraints and limitations on co-mingling with other employment and training fund sources. (Page 15)

Response to Issue: The Department currently hosts two workgroups focused on the modernization of its Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program. Through the work of the Department's P-10 Innovation Workgroup, Local Departments of Social Services (LDSSs) and DHS Central staff develop guidance that supports a family-centered approach to work programs. This approach is rooted in meeting families where they are; there is a large focus on ensuring work and education activities are accessible to families who have barriers such as transportation and technical limitations. A second workgroup focused solely on centering the customer's voice is a tool for real-time feedback on proposed and implemented policy changes.

Through the P-10 Innovation workgroup, the Department has updated the Partnership for Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Plan guidelines to support an approach that more closely aligns with the Maryland Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan. In doing so, LDSSs leverage resources outside of traditional vendors to enroll customers in activities such as online classes and virtual training. These changes represent an opportunity to modernize training and upskilling efforts to prepare families for a changing labor market.



Finally, the Department has also provided guidance that allows LDSSs to address barriers such as access to high-speed internet and technology equipment.

Issue #3: DHS should discuss the timeline for completing the RELIEF Act reenrollments and issuing the retroactive payments. (Page 18)

Response to Issue: Prior to the enactment of the RELIEF Act of 2021, the Department had previously reopened approximately 3,000 of the 7,000 TDAP cases that are now eligible for reopening. This effort continues with the newly identified households eligible to be reopened under the provisions of the RELIEF Act. The Department anticipates the completion of this project on or before March 8, 2021. Additionally, to prevent any additional case closures through June 30, 2021, the Department has suspended any system closure due to TDAP changes including extending any case due for redetermination on or before June 30, 2021, for 6 months.

Effective February 19, 2021, the Department began accepting self-attestation to verify disability status. In order to relieve vulnerable customers of the administrative burdens during this crisis, the Department now considers any individual who marks themselves as disabled on their application as meeting the disability criteria for TDAP.

Issue #4: DHS should comment on if it anticipates providing the additional \$100 beginning in February or whether this would begin in March. (Page 18)

Response to Issue: The Department issued the additional \$100 benefit for the month of February on February 26, 2021 and will provide this additional benefit on each TDAP recipient's standard benefit issuance date for the months of March through June 2021.

Issue #5: DHS should comment on how it would cover such a shortfall if it materializes, given that the TANF balance is expected to be depleted. (Page 20)

Response to Issue: The DHS will continue to monitor the caseload trends and related spending closely. We believe the funding for FY 2022 will be adequate to meet the anticipated caseloads. Should the shortfall noted by the Analyst come true, the DHS will work with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to address the funding gap for these Entitlement programs.

Issue #6: DHS should provide an update on the status of the State plan, anticipated timeline for distribution of the school-based program and child care program, and communications that it plans to make related to how to decline the benefit. (Page 31)

Response to Issue: The Department issued September Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits to approximately 440,000 children. Maryland's new P-EBT Plan, which covers benefits for October 2020 through September 30, 2021, is under review by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS).

Maryland's new P-EBT Plan is pending approval with our federal partners. The tentative timeline for distribution of the P-EBT Program including children in child care programs will be the following:



- Includes issuing benefits from October 2020 – November 2020 will be issued in April 2021.
- December 2020 and January 2021 benefits will be issued in May.

In early February 2021, FNS released guidelines addressing P-EBT eligibility for children in certain childcare facilities based on the provisions of the federal Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021. Under the provisions of the Appropriations Act, a child under the age of six is eligible for P-EBT if she or he is a member of a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) household and lives in an area where a school or a childcare facility is operating at reduced capacity due to COVID-19. The Department estimates that approximately 80,000 Maryland children under the age of six who receive SNAP are eligible under this provision. Upon FNS approval, the Department will issue October through December 2020 benefits in consultation with its IT vendor.

The Department has posted instructions on its P-EBT webpage on how an individual may dispose of their P-EBT card if they wish to decline the benefit.

Issue #7: DHS should discuss the first year of implementation of the program and efforts to expand the reach of the program in the second year given the limitations in State funding, including encouraging local jurisdictions to contribute higher than the minimum local share. (Page 33)

Response to Issue: The Department allocated \$201,577 for Summer SNAP during FY 2021. Fourteen jurisdictions submitted applications to participate in the program. The Department selected four jurisdictions based on demonstrated need, commitment to contribute the required match, and willingness to leverage existing summer feeding programs. Approximately 4,000 children received Summer SNAP benefits, consistent with the total available budget. The local jurisdictions combined provided \$220,390 in the Local Share of Funds - bringing the total available funding to \$421,967.

The local jurisdictions were encouraged to contribute more than the minimum required local share of funds. Montgomery County is the only jurisdiction that contributed more than the required amount.

The Department issued FY 2022 Summer SNAP guidelines on December 31, 2020. Throughout the application period, the Department continues to urge local jurisdictions to contribute more than the minimum local share so that additional children can be served. Direct communications are shared with LDSS leadership stakeholders in various formats including weekly updates at meetings with LDSS Directors and twice-monthly meetings with LDSS FIA Leadership.

It is important to note that the Department implemented Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) statewide concurrent with the FY 2021 Summer SNAP benefits. Over 450,000 children received P-EBT between June and September 2020. On average, each eligible child received \$475 in P-EBT benefits over this time frame. P-EBT benefits will continue to be available until September 30, 2021.



Response to Recommended Action

Recommended Action #1

Reduce general funds to account for the failure to revert \$950,000 in the fiscal 2020 closeout process. **(Pages 3 and 34)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Recommended Action #2

Adopt committee narrative requesting information on case closures by reason. **(Pages 3 and 34)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Recommended Action #3

Adopt committee narrative requesting reports on the Summer Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Children. **(Pages 3 and 35)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Recommended Action #4

Adopt committee narrative requesting that the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer benefits be identified separately in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program spending. **(Pages 3, 35 and 36)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Recommended Action #5

Adopt committee narrative requesting information on application processing times and denial rates. **(Pages 3 and 36)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

Recommended Action #6

Adopt committee narrative requesting that data on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program be included in the Managing for Results submission. **(Pages 3, 36 and 37)**

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation.

