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One in Four California Households with Children Report Inability to Afford Enough Food *Data Also Shows Widespread Struggle in Every Congressional District, Underscoring Need to Protect Nutrition Safety Net*

Oakland, CA - August 11, 2011 - More than 26 percent of households with children in California reported in 2009-2010 not having enough money to buy food that they needed at times for themselves or their family, according to a new analysis of Gallup data released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

FRAC's Food Hardship in America series analyzes data that was collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. The data was gathered as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed more than one million households since January 2008. FRAC 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?"

The analysis released today examines food hardship rates – the inability to afford enough food – for households with and without children. Data is available for every state, every Congressional District and 100 of the country's largest Metropolitan Areas, including ten in California.

- In 2009-2010, 26.7 percent of households with children in California said they were unable to afford enough food. The food hardship rate for households without children was 15.8 percent.
- Ten large metropolitan areas in California were included in the report, with four ranked among the top 20 for food hardship rates for households with children in 2009-2010: Fresno (32.6 percent), Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario (30.4 percent), Bakersfield (29.5 percent), and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana (28.3 percent). The San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont MSA had a food hardship rate of 17.6 percent for households with children.
- Of the 45 Congressional Districts with the worst rates, six were in California. Twenty-five of the 53 congressional districts in California had more than one in four households with children reporting food hardship in 2009-2010.

"The food hardship rate for households without children is far too high, but we can see that the situation for households with children is much worse," said Eric Manke, Policy Manager for the California Association of Food Banks. "This new data reaffirms what food banks are seeing in communities across California – that far too many people continue to struggle with hunger in these economic times. This data demonstrates, as if any further evidence were needed, that this is not the time to make our safety net weaker. Congress must ensure that all deficit negotiations protect nutrition programs and other parts of the safety net that help low-income people."

When Congress returns to Washington after its August recess, it will enter the next phase of the recently passed debt ceiling deal: the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (also known as the "Super Committee") will hold its first meeting and begin to develop plans to cut an additional \$1.5 trillion in spending. California Association of Food Banks joined FRAC in urging Congress and the "Super Committee" to protect low-income programs such as SNAP (food stamps or CalFresh in California), emergency food programs, school meals, and WIC from cuts.

“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 data for California shows moreover that the state and its cities, counties and school districts have to do a much better job using federally-funded anti-hunger programs. About 50% of eligible Californians do not participate in CalFresh, ranking California second to last among states on measures of participation. Increasing participation to near 100% of eligible households, as other states have done, could mean an additional \$4.9 billion in federal benefits for needy Californians. Moreover, increasing participation has the potential to benefit all Californians through more than \$8.7 billion in associated economic activity. If California were reaching more people with these programs, we would have less hunger, healthier children, more federal dollars flowing into the state, more economic growth, and more jobs.

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

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About the Report

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About the California Association of Food Banks

The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well nourished California. For more information on the California Association of Food Banks please visit our website at www.cafoodbanks.org.