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## **New Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Report** ***Child Hunger in Rhode Island***

Providence, RI (December 3, 2020) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release an *Issue Brief* focused on nutrition and child hunger on **Thursday, December 3, 2020 from 2:30 to 4:00 pm via Zoom**. To join the event and access the *Issue Brief* under embargo, please contact Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Communications Manager Katy Chu ([kchu@rikidscount.org](mailto:kchu@rikidscount.org)).

At the release event, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Senior Policy Analyst Paige Clausius-Parks and Policy Analyst Katie Orona will provide an overview of the *Issue Brief* and its recommendations. Speakers at the event will include Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant; Luisa Murillo, Progreso Latino; Director Courtney Hawkins, Rhode Island Department of Human Services; Steve Carey, Rhode Island Department of Education; Ann Barone, Rhode Island Department of Health; and Representative Marcia Ranglin-Vassell.

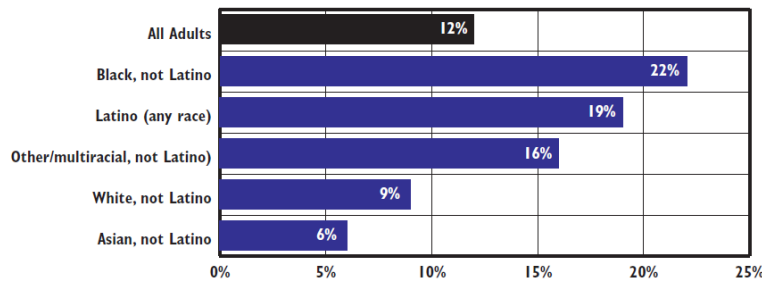
**The importance of nutrition to child development cannot be overstated.** Hunger and lack of regular access to sufficient food are linked to serious physical, psychological, emotional, and academic problems in children and can interfere with their growth and development. Food insecurity is a method to measure and assess the risk of hunger. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Between 2017-2019, 9.1% of Rhode Island households and 11.1% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2019, 13.6% of all U.S. households with children were food insecure, while 37.1% of U.S. households with children and incomes below the poverty level experienced food insecurity.

### **(In) Equity and The Effects of COVID-19**

Latino, Black, Indigenous, and immigrant populations are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to longstanding and unacceptable inequities derived from historical and structural racism and bias in health care, housing, employment opportunities, and access to healthy food. "To address child hunger in Rhode Island, we must identify the needs of communities of color that are rooted in and are exacerbated by systemic racism and work with urgency to dismantle these systems," said Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

### Black and Latino Households Likelier to Experience Food Insecurity During Pandemic

SHARE OF U.S. ADULTS SAYING THAT THEIR HOUSEHOLD SOMETIMES OR OFTEN DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT IN THE LAST 7 DAYS

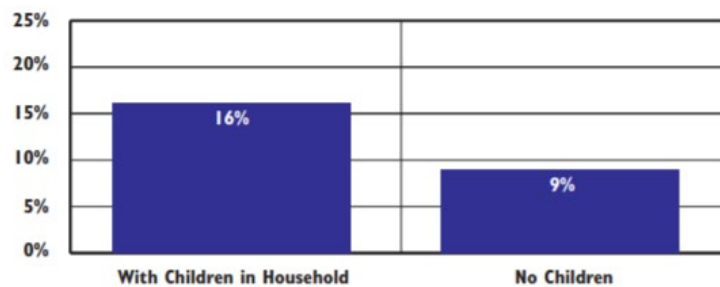


Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for October 28-November 9, 2020.

National and local data demonstrates that People of Color have experienced higher rates of food insecurity during the pandemic than White families. Communities of color will continue to face greater challenges as a result of the pandemic due to loss of employment or income and its long-term effects on economic mobility.

### For 1 in 6 Adults With Children, Household Lacked Sufficient Food in Last 7 Days

SHARE OF U.S. ADULTS REPORTING THAT THEIR HOUSEHOLD SOMETIMES OR OFTEN DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT



Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for October 28-November 9, 2020.

Note: Chart excludes individuals who did not respond to the question.

Data from the Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey indicates that households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic than those without. National estimates project that by 2020 the child food insecurity rate will increase to 27-29% in Rhode Island due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collecting data on the scale and nature of the impact on children, expanding public assistance programs that meet the immediate needs of families, and prioritizing child-centered services with a focus on equity will help inform policymakers and minimize the impact of the pandemic on our most vulnerable children and families.

“The pandemic has exacerbated the already alarming issue of food insecurity and child hunger and the glaring and unacceptable disparities by race and ethnicity. This Issue Brief is a call to action to ensure that children and their families have access to the food

and nutrition they need to thrive by expanding access to public food programs, increasing outreach to families who are falling through the cracks, and supporting community efforts to increase access to high quality food in the most impacted communities”, said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Areas of focus in the *Issue Brief* include:

- **The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** is a federally-funded preventive program that provides participants with nutritious food, nutrition education, and referrals to health care and social services.
- **The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** helps child care centers, preschools, home-based child care providers, after-school programs, and homeless shelters provide nutritious foods to infants, children, and youth by providing cash reimbursement for serving meals and snacks that meet federal nutrition guidelines to eligible children.
- **The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, formerly the Food Stamp Program, helps low-income individuals and families obtain better nutrition through monthly benefits they can use to purchase food at retail stores and some farmers markets.
- **The School Breakfast Program** helps ensure that the nation’s most vulnerable children start their day off with a healthy meal, and **the National School Lunch Program** provides nutritious free or reduced-price lunches to children while in school.
- **The Summer Food Service Program (“Summer Meal Program”)** is a federally-funded program administered by the Rhode Island Department of Education that provides free healthy lunches, breakfasts and, in some cases, dinners or snacks that meet federal nutrition standards to children in low-income communities during the summer months when school is not in session through reimbursements to summer camp providers, public and private school food agencies, state and local governments, and colleges.
- **The Rhode Island Community Food Bank (RI Food Bank)** distributes food to people in need through a statewide network of 168 member agencies.
- In March 2020, as part of the Family First Coronavirus Response Act, the U.S. Congress enacted **Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT)**, a new nutrition assistance program that allowed states to provide funds in grocery benefits to make up for meals missed in the spring of 2020 due to school closures.

"We must end childhood hunger in our small state of Rhode Island. Progreso Latino has seen thousands of Latino and immigrant mothers with infants and little children in the food pantry lines during the pandemic. If we do not address childhood hunger today, we risk condemning the next five generations of children into systemic poverty over the next 200 years," said Luisa C. Murillo, Director of Social Programs at Progreso Latino.

The *Issue Brief* includes comprehensive recommendations for improvement, and resources for children and families. Please see pages 9-10 of the publication.