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**Half of Households with Children in the First Congressional District Report Inability to Afford Food**  
*Data Also Show Widespread Struggle in Every Congressional District, Underscoring Need to Protect Nutrition Safety Net*

**Philadelphia – August 11, 2011** – According to a report released today by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), nearly half of all households with children living in Pennsylvania's First Congressional District reported not having enough money to buy food in 2008-2010. Across the state, one in 5 households with children experienced such food hardship.

FRAC's *Food Hardship in America* series analyzes data that were collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. The data were gathered as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed more than one million households since January 2008. FRAC has 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 impact of such extreme food hardship will have permanent consequences for the health, development and future potential of the nation's children," said Dr. Mariana Chilton, an associate professor and director of the Center for Hunger-Free Communities at the Drexel University School of Public Health. "Our research has shown that children in food insecure households are at greater risk for health problems, impaired cognitive development, behavioral and emotional problems, and are more likely to have trouble in school and the workforce."

The analysis released today examines food hardship rates – the inability to afford enough food – for households with and without children. Data are available for every state, every Congressional District and 100 of the country's largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Findings for childhood food hardship in Pennsylvania include:

- In 2009-2010, **21.6 percent** of households with children in Pennsylvania said they were unable to afford enough food. The food hardship rate for households without children was 13.3 percent.
- In the First Congressional District, a staggering **49.6 percent** of households with children experienced food hardship in 2008-2010.
- In the Second Congressional District, the food hardship rate among households with children was **32.2 percent**.

“These data demonstrate that now is NOT the time to weaken our safety net. Congress must protect SNAP (food stamps), WIC, housing subsidies, and other parts of the safety net that help struggling families,” said Tianna Gaines, Board Chair of Witnesses to Hunger, a project of the Center for Hunger-Free Communities working to ensure that those who know hunger and poverty first-hand are heard by local, state, and federal policy-makers.

The report also found that nearly one in four U.S. households with children (23.4 percent) struggled to afford enough food for themselves and their families in 2010. The food hardship rate for U.S. households without children was 14.9 percent.

“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 their district.”

Moreover, the data show that Pennsylvania and its many cities, counties, and suburbs have to do a much better job of helping families escape poverty.

“It is appalling that almost half of all households with children in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District can’t afford food,” said Dr. Chilton. “We all must take ownership of the problem and identify solutions. Government agencies, corporations, hospitals, foundations, non-profits, and ordinary citizens all have important roles to play.”

The full analysis is available on FRAC’s website ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)).

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