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Contact: Jeanette Mott Oxford
joxford@masw.org; 314-775-3261

One in Four Households with Children in Missouri Report Inability to Afford Enough Food

*Data Also Show Widespread Struggle in Every State and Metropolitan Area,
Underscoring Need to Protect Nutrition Safety Net in Farm Bill*

Jefferson City, MO – The recession has meant that high numbers of all types of households have been struggling to purchase adequate food, but households with children suffered extraordinarily high rates, according to a new national report released today. In surveys running for five years through 2012, nearly one in four households with children said they couldn't consistently afford food, even as the House Majority Leadership is proposing to cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) by a staggering \$40 billion.

Food Hardship 2008-2012: Geography and Household Structure, released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), found that in surveys from 2008-2012, 24 percent of households with children in Missouri said there were times in the prior year when they did not have enough money to buy food that they needed for themselves or their family. **More than 17 percent of households without children Missouri said they faced the same struggle, a rate that placed Missouri among the 15 states with the worst rates.**

“Given the high rates of poverty and hunger in Missouri, it is outrageous that Congress is even debating cuts to SNAP,” said Jeanette Mott Oxford, executive director of Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW). “We have unacceptable deprivation in both households with children and without. Members of Congress need to offer help, not harm. The first step is to pass a Farm Bill that doesn't cut SNAP.”

This report is consistent with data released by the federal government this month which show how many Americans continue to struggle. Food insecurity data, released by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), show that 16.7% in Missouri struggled with hunger during the 2010 to 2012 period. (Those data are not broken down by households with and without children.) And national poverty data released yesterday by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that the national poverty rate has remained at elevated rates since the recession began.

“What these numbers tell us is that there's a new reality for too many Americans. Hunger and poverty rates spiked at the beginning of the recession and have stayed high ever since,” said Glenn Koenen, chair of MASW's Hunger Task Force. “Charities such as food pantries in Missouri cannot keep up with demand, even at current levels of food stamps. Cuts to SNAP would worsen an already dire situation.”

The FRAC analysis examines food hardship rates – the inability to afford enough food – for households with and without children. Data are available for the nation, every state and region, and 100 of the

country's largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), including Kansas City and St. Louis in Missouri. Findings for food hardship for surveys from 2008-2012 in Missouri include:

- 24.0 percent of households with children in Missouri said they were unable to afford enough food. The food hardship rate for households without children was 17.1 percent.
- Regionally, the Midwest had a food hardship rate of 23.2 percent for households with children and 15.1 percent for those consisting only of adults.
- For the Kansas City MSA, the food hardship rate for households with children was 20.0 percent and 15.3 percent for households without children.
- For the St. Louis MSA, the food hardship rate for households with children was 21.3 percent and 13.3 percent for households without children.

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

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About the data

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 nearly 1.8 million households between 2008 and 2012. 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?"

About the Food Research and Action Center:

The Food Research and Action Center is the lead advocacy organization working to end hunger in America through stronger public policies. For more information, visit www.frac.org. Find FRAC on Facebook at facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/fractweets. FRAC's Campaign to End Childhood Hunger aims to provide all children in this country with the good nutrition they need to be healthy, to learn, and to grow into productive adults who fulfill their potential. It is working both to raise low-income families' incomes and to expand the reach of federal nutrition supports.

About MASW:

MASW (www.masw.org), founded in 1901, provides leadership, research, education, and advocacy to improve public policy and programs impacting the health and welfare of all Missourians. MASW played major roles in the initiation of the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, the reduction of sales tax on food by three cents, development of the Missouri Housing Trust Fund, establishment of foundations to address health disparities, plus many other social justice victories.