



# There is a hunger crisis in America.

Last year, 1 in 6 people in the U.S.—**53 million people**—sought help from the charitable food sector. To end hunger, we must listen to the people experiencing it.

People facing hunger are at the center of our work. Through a nationwide community listening initiative—*Elevating Voices to End Hunger Together*—Feeding America, working alongside network food banks, statewide associations and partner food pantries, sought input on anti-hunger solutions from tens of thousands of people with lived experience from across the country.

**130K**  
ENGAGEMENTS

nearly **36K** / from all **50**  
RESPONDENTS / STATES

**THIS THREE-MONTH INITIATIVE INCLUDED:**

TEXT MESSAGE OUTREACH TO **100K** PEOPLE  
*that's 8,600 conversations!*

**1.3K** PEOPLE SURVEYED

**25K** QUESTIONNAIRES FILLED OUT

**126** LISTENING SESSIONS  
*that's 1,047 participants!*

## Prioritizing Dignity

Logistical hurdles, complex eligibility and application rules, and associated stigma can converge to choke access to federal assistance programs and create feelings of shame. In listening sessions, people facing hunger shared that benefit levels are not always adequate for them to purchase the foods that will help their families thrive. More than three-quarters of survey participants (78%) want the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to make it easier to access healthy foods, not restrict food choices. The majority of survey respondents (88%) said it was important to support people's dignity and choices in what they feed their families.

## Increasing Access

Insights from our neighbors facing hunger demonstrate the ways hunger intersects with and is exacerbated by other issues, like access to transportation. Nearly half (49%) of the people Feeding America surveyed said their communities need more food pantries, grocery stores and fresh food to thrive.

## Expanding Opportunity

Neighbors facing hunger identified a number of issues as root causes of hunger. People facing hunger—50% of English questionnaire respondents and 45% of Spanish questionnaire respondents—cite housing costs as a major driver of hunger and poverty. Forty-seven percent of English questionnaire respondents and 43% of Spanish questionnaire respondents said low-wage jobs are a root cause of hunger. People facing hunger also cite navigating the immigration process as a barrier to thriving.

## Improving Health

People facing hunger mentioned barriers to accessing both nutritious food and health care and health care services. These challenges are particularly acute for the challenges are particularly acute for older adults and people living in rural areas. Nearly all (92%) of survey participants agreed that “food is medicine—if you have regular access to healthy foods, you feel better physically, emotionally, and mentally.”

“There is not one-size-fits-all and I literally have fallen through nearly every crack. Create flexibility in programs so that people can qualify.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT IN CASS COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA



**ELEVATING VOICES TO END HUNGER TOGETHER**



## Policy Recommendations

The anti-hunger policy recommendations supported by our neighbors facing hunger are grounded in **prioritizing dignity, increasing access, expanding opportunity and improving health.** Here are just a few:

### JOIN US

**Together, we can end the hunger crisis in America and build thriving, equitable communities.**

Congress should **increase SNAP benefit levels and expand eligibility criteria** to help more people buy nutritious foods. Congress should also **expand options for people receiving SNAP benefits** by increasing funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) and other proven approaches that encourage healthy food purchases, instead of limiting choices. In addition, Congress should improve the SNAP benefit-taper structure **to reduce the “benefits cliff”** by raising income thresholds to phase out benefits more gradually and provide people with more stability on the path toward self-sufficiency.

Congress should **increase The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding**—for food purchases as well as storage and distribution costs—through the 2023 Farm Bill.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should continue to identify opportunities to provide **funds for food distribution** as part of commodity support purchases funded through Section 32, the Commodity Credit Corporation and other sources.

Congress should **improve and simplify access to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program** by allowing more schools to offer free meals to all students by expanding community eligibility and increasing opportunities to directly certify children for free meals.

Congress should extend the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program into a **permanent Summer EBT program** to boost families’ food budgets during summer breaks and when youth meals are not otherwise available through school and child care settings. Congress should also provide more **flexibility for summer meal programs**, including allowing kids to eat meals off-site, streamlining regulations and lowering the area eligibility requirement to better serve rural communities.

Congress should **permanently expand the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit.**

People facing hunger are open to a broad set of policies to **address high housing costs**, including more affordable housing in communities, rent controls, additional housing aid and oversight programs for landlords.

Congress should **support and fund produce prescription initiatives** through U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) programs and support and provide **funding for food pantries located in health care settings.**

### **THESE ARE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT *ELEVATING VOICES TO END HUNGER TOGETHER: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS AMERICA’S HUNGER CRISIS.***

*Elevating Voices to End Hunger Together* is an initiative to gather input from people with lived experience through listening sessions, surveys, questionnaires and texts. Insights presented are from nearly 36,000 people across the country who self-identified as facing challenges getting the food they need. They are not representative of all people facing hunger.

Feeding America believes bold solutions require broad support. We can harness the power of a nation to end hunger by engaging every citizen, every elected official and every organization in a unified effort.

Visit [FeedingAmerica.org/elevatingvoices](https://FeedingAmerica.org/elevatingvoices) to learn more about joining us in the fight to end hunger.

