Elevating Voices: Insights Report 2023
ENDING HUNGER TOGETHER
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With support from Feeding America network food banks, the following individuals were among people who recorded video testimonials at Feeding America’s inaugural Elevating Voices: Power Summit. Their firsthand experiences provided deep learnings about the reality of hunger—alongside solutions for addressing it—and invaluable nuance to the quantitative data featured in this report. We are grateful to Beekeeper Group for their support in recording the testimonials.

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San Antonio Food Bank

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Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC
Second Harvest Heartland
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Many more individuals from the Feeding America network contributed to this project in meaningful ways. We are also grateful to PerryUndem and Precision Strategies for their support in gathering and analyzing the insights collected through this effort.
Feeding America’s 2023 *Elevating Voices: Insights Report* provides a firsthand snapshot of the experiences, concerns and ideas of people facing hunger in the U.S. and builds on the inaugural report released ahead of the historic 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Released as part of Hunger Action Month—a time to focus collective efforts across the country to reduce food insecurity and inspire more people and organizations to take part in the movement to end hunger—this year’s report again elevates the voices of neighbors facing hunger, defined in the report as people who reported receiving charitable food assistance and/or experienced food insecurity within the past few years.

Federal interventions, the charitable food sector and the collective effort of the public working alongside people facing hunger helped mitigate a national hunger crisis brought on by the pandemic in 2020. Yet, while working hard to provide for themselves and their families, approximately 49 million people—one out of every six people in the U.S.—turned to charitable food assistance for support in 2022. As we work together to make progress toward ending hunger, we must listen to and learn from our neighbors facing hunger. They are the real experts whose voices must be at the table when designing solutions to end hunger.

People facing hunger are clear and loud: For tens of millions of our neighbors, hunger remains a devastating reality in America despite headlines asserting an improving economy and lower unemployment rates. Eighty-eight percent of neighbors facing hunger agreed federal and local governments should treat the problem as an urgent crisis.

Persistent inflation and an end to emergency pandemic assistance have made it even harder for many individuals and their families to access and afford the food they say they need to thrive. Of the people we surveyed, 8 in 10 neighbors facing hunger told us that inflation and higher food prices have exacerbated hunger in America, and 9 in 10 are concerned things could worsen. These findings echo on-the-ground accounts of a sustained or increased demand for food assistance across the Feeding America network. We have made some progress, but we can and must do more.
Neighbors identified the cost of living, high-priced housing and health care as among the top reasons it is increasingly difficult to afford and access the food they need to thrive. Neighbors reiterated that policymakers must expand programs and implement policies that ensure everyone has the necessary essentials to succeed, from access to meals to a place to call home.

Neighbors told us that where there has been economic recovery, it has been uneven—especially among communities of color. Neighbors see racial discrimination as a significant barrier, with 79% saying structural racism plays a role in who is most impacted by hunger and food insecurity and half reporting racism or discrimination has limited their opportunities in life.

Eighty-nine percent agreed that tackling food insecurity must start with communities that experience it at higher rates.

88% of neighbors facing hunger say federal and local governments should treat hunger as an urgent crisis.

“As much as you work, the system is set up for you to continue in a cycle of food insecurity. Your whole check goes to a rent payment if you’re not fortunate enough to own a house, with nothing leftover. But you get kicked off if you make $2 more. There needs to be some security, there needs to be a revamping of the whole system … it seems like instead of creating less barriers to help the families in our community, it seems like policies and procedures continue to make more barriers.”

— Jennifer Estrada, Wisconsin

In this year’s Insights Report, neighbors not only painted a more detailed picture of food insecurity in America in 2023, but their insights provided a vision and policy road map toward a hunger-free nation. Neighbors agreed that providing hunger relief today—and ending hunger for good tomorrow—necessitates policies that address both the factors beyond food that impact food insecurity, such as housing, health care and public transportation, and the systems that do not work for everyone and, instead, perpetuate disparate rates of hunger racially and geographically. Our nation already has proven anti-hunger tools at its disposal, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that 93% of neighbors consider to be a valuable program for reducing hunger. Our policymakers must invest in these tools and build upon them.
As Congress continues to negotiate the 2023 Farm Bill and other legislation that will impact hunger in our country for years to come, work to ignite a movement to end hunger in America is more important than ever. That movement can succeed when neighbors are at its heart and policymakers, organizations and supporters are united with them to establish innovative policies and programs that prioritize dignity, increase access, expand opportunity and improve health for all. Guided by the voices of people facing hunger, the 2023 Elevating Voices: Insights Report steers the direction of the work that we all must support, now more than ever.

“\nWhen you’re food insecure, it feels so consuming, it feels like there’s not another side. It feels like it’s just a generational line that keeps coming. Sometimes people are tasked with the obligation to break it for the generations after them, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. How you go through it sometimes feels terrible, but there is a light.”

— Keonna Yearwood, Florida

2023 Elevating Voices: Insights Report Background

In 2022, following the announcement by President Biden of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health—the first major anti-hunger convening hosted by the federal government in half a century—Feeding America launched an ambitious, nationwide community listening initiative to uplift the voices of people facing hunger.

The project gathered insights from nearly 36,000 neighbors from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico through listening sessions, an in-depth survey, questionnaires and text message outreach. The result was the publication of a first-of-its-kind report, Elevating Voices to End Hunger Together: Community-Driven Solutions to Address America’s Hunger Crisis, last September. The report drew on the experiences, concerns and ideas of people facing hunger to raise neighbor-informed policy recommendations at the White House Conference to address and ultimately end hunger in America.

Elevating Voices Platform Overview

Elevating Voices is Feeding America’s platform for consistently engaging with and amplifying the experiences and expertise of neighbors and advancing new understandings, ideas and narratives informed by the people closest to the issue of hunger. The platform currently comprises the annual Insights Report and the Elevating Voices: Power Summit. Pictures in this report were gathered at the Power Summit.
Feeding America evaluated survey results to better understand the lived experiences of people facing hunger nationwide. Additionally, we asked neighbors at the first-ever Elevating Voices: Power Summit—a forum co-created alongside people with lived experience of food insecurity for them to hear from, learn from and forge community with each other and to share their informed views directly with federal policymakers—to provide additional insights into the day-to-day experience of facing hunger, which added firsthand context to the findings in this report.

In gathering the quantitative data, Feeding America engaged the nonpartisan research firm PerryUndem and their partners at The Center for Advancing Innovative Policy (CAIP) to conduct a nationally representative survey of people who have received charitable food assistance and/or experienced food insecurity in the past two years. The survey was 18 minutes long, offered in Spanish or English, and ran from April 26 to May 8, 2023. It was fielded using YouGov’s online panel. Feeding America collaborated with marketing agency Precision Strategies to analyze the insights from the survey.

In all, 1,129 adults participated in the survey. Among respondents, 44% were white, 32% were Hispanic, 17% were Black, 1% were Asian, 1% were Native American and 4% identified as other races. To ensure an inclusive representation of neighbor insights, the survey oversampled Black adults, Latino adults and adults who have been to a food bank in the last two years. The margin of sampling error for total results is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

To further draw actionable insights regarding the Native American community, Feeding America also commissioned PerryUndem and CAIP to conduct four focus groups with Native American adults who have experienced food insecurity and/or have visited a food bank in the last two years. The focus groups took place from April 25 to May 3, 2023. Tribal communities represented include Crow, Navajo, Standing Rock Sioux, ShoBan, Santo Domingo Pueblo, Todikozhi, Jicarilla Apache, Hopi, Lumbee, San Felipe Pueblo and Grand Traverse Ottawa and Chippewa. Feeding America again partnered with Precision Strategies to glean learnings from the focus groups.

Neighbors reported seeking support in several different areas. The report uses the following headings to categorize neighbor insights and Feeding America’s resulting policy recommendations: prioritizing dignity, increasing access, expanding opportunity and improving health.
Insights and Solutions to End Hunger
Everyone deserves dignified access to food. Unfortunately, many neighbors told us that when navigating federal food assistance programs, many miss out on critical support and are left feeling frustrated or stripped of their fundamental humanity and dignity.

As in last year’s survey, neighbors continue to cite hard-to-understand rules, administrative red tape and shame felt for seeking help as factors mitigating government anti-hunger programs’ ability to adequately serve individuals facing challenges with putting food on the table.

In this year’s survey, neighbors again underlined that simplifying access to anti-hunger programs like SNAP—the nation’s largest and most effective food assistance program—must be a cornerstone of addressing food insecurity and ensuring people in need of food support actually receive it. Across the board, individuals facing hunger remain adamant that decision-makers must break down programmatic barriers and ensure federal nutrition programs facilitate better, faster and more people-centered support so everyone can obtain the healthy food they need with dignity.

93% of neighbors are concerned that the ongoing hunger crisis could get worse.
Roadblocks exist before many neighbors can even begin the process of receiving federal food assistance. When it comes to specific factors preventing people facing hunger from easily accessing nutrition support from the start, neighbors repeatedly mentioned technological gaps. Neighbors told us that lacking access to a phone or computer often impedes their ability to complete applications.

Stigma is also a deterrent when enrolling in SNAP and other programs. Neighbors said that ending the stigma that makes people facing hunger think twice before seeking assistance will require shifts in both policy and culture.

Upon benefit receipt, particularly amid an economic rebound that is not evenly felt across communities, neighbors highlighted the need for program benefits that sufficiently equip them to put food on the table. Benefits levels that accurately reflect the current cost of living are essential for prioritizing dignity of choice among people receiving food assistance. Neighbors also said decision-makers must taper off benefits in ways that do not abruptly leave people facing hunger without much-needed support as they begin to gain financial security.

“It took me a long time to come to terms with the fact that I needed to ask for help. I worked very hard, coming from a home-insecure, food-insecure family. Coming from all of that and working so hard to not have to live off of welfare, right, to not have to live in the projects anymore. I’ve always worked since I could legally work. When I need to ask for help, even though I’m working, it’s difficult.”

— Erica Campos, Texas

“Food stamps said ‘You make $33,000 a year? Bye!’ I was bringing home $400 a week. That’s $1,600 a month. That is not enough to live on. Who is going to live on that? And I have a disabled son. If I said I can’t take care of him anymore because it’s too hard, I’m going to give him to New York State, it would cost $120,000 [for them]. It would cost them $120,000 to raise my son, but I’m supposed to do it on $400 a week?”

— Dawn Tallet, New York

When moving through each step to finally receive benefits, many neighbors shared experiences of dehumanizing encounters and administrative apathy—reflecting the need for federal nutrition programs to prioritize dignity.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighbors agreed it is possible to create a system that administers food assistance and respects people in the process. Informed by what neighbors are experiencing, Feeding America recommends specific policy changes to improve efficiency and dignity across federal nutrition programs.

• Congress should set Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at an adequate level to ensure individuals and families can purchase enough nutritious foods. **Eighty-seven percent of neighbors surveyed agreed that they are worried more people will experience food shortages following the end of SNAP emergency allotments.**

• Congress, in consultation with the territories, should provide a pathway for U.S. territories to transition to full participation in SNAP. For example, Congress can work to allow Puerto Rico to transition from Nutrition Assistance Program block grants to full participation in SNAP.

• Congress should ensure participants can choose the foods that meet the dietary needs of themselves and their families. Congress should increase access to nutritious foods for people facing hunger by increasing funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) for food purchases, which provide a significant amount of nutritious food through food banks, and increasing SNAP benefit amounts through incentives, like those offered for produce purchases through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP). This approach helps maintain the dignity of choice for neighbors instead of limiting options. **Eighty-seven percent of neighbors surveyed agreed that if Congress passes policies to reduce hunger and food insecurity, it is important that these policies support people’s dignity and choices in what they feed their families.**

• The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Congress should improve and simplify SNAP access, particularly for seniors, college students, immigrants and others who do not qualify for or are unable to participate in SNAP due to eligibility and enrollment barriers, including a five-year waiting period for people with a green card.

• The USDA, including through their work with states, should reduce barriers to TEFAP eligibility, such as minimizing paperwork for people seeking assistance, making it easier for working families to receive TEFAP foods, and reducing paperwork requirements for food banks and neighbors receiving TEFAP foods.

• The administration and Congress should work with tribes to increase food security in Native American communities, including by allowing tribal governments to administer federal programs. Congress should allow participants in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) to receive SNAP benefits as well. **In focus groups with tribal communities, neighbors said they hold positive views of SNAP, acknowledging its powerful role in increasing food access.**

• Congress should expand the availability of culturally relevant foods in federal nutrition programs, such as halal and kosher foods.
Everyone needs access to nutritious food to thrive. In 2022, neighbors said getting their food of choice is one of their primary challenges. In 2023, anxieties around food access still linger. In this year’s survey, neighbors also reiterated that food insecurity is related to many other issues, such as cost of living and housing. Increasing access to food requires policymakers to take a multi-faceted approach that addresses the myriad drivers of food insecurity in parallel.

Our neighbors reminded us that, while food insecurity can affect anyone, and its immediate causes are many and complex, the opportunity to reliably access food is clearly not distributed equitably across America. Food insecurity rates among individuals who identify as Black, Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander individuals are 2-3 times as high as white individuals. Increasing access to food and more broadly ending hunger cannot be separated from efforts to uproot structures of inequity in every corner of the United States.

81% of neighbors facing hunger believe that inflation and higher food prices have exacerbated hunger in America.

INSIGHTS FROM PEOPLE FACING HUNGER

One in 3 neighbors identified living in areas with fewer grocery stores and less access to healthy, affordable food and less access to food banks and assistance in certain communities as factors impacting food insecurity. Neighbors indicated that limited proximity to these vital touch points for getting food is exacerbated by long-standing inequities in public transportation, which are disproportionately heightened in communities of color, rural communities and communities with low incomes. Indeed, 25% of neighbors named having limited transportation options as a factor contributing to food insecurity.

“Sometimes in the rural areas, they don’t have food pantries that are close by, or that they have no means of transportation to get to that food. So, it’s a terrible thing. You have belly-aches. You feel terrible as a parent, because I have had to live with food insecurities at times, and it’s never a good thing when your children are asking for cereal and you don’t have cereal.”

— Nordia Hoff, New York
In addition to challenges accessing stores and charitable food options, 26% of neighbors said lack of knowledge of how to receive government assistance is also a barrier to food security.

While there is broad support for more robust government action, neighbors also said they are seeking new programs and legislation that center self-sufficiency for communities impacted by hunger. Ninety-four percent of neighbors agreed that if Congress passes policies to reduce hunger and food insecurity, it is important that these policies bring long-term, sustainable food and farming solutions to under-resourced communities so they can better support themselves.

“It’s not always easy to ask for help, but you don’t have to look at it as taking a handout. Looking out and getting the resources is just helping yourself, and it’s moving up to step-up and moving onto the next step, and moving forward in your life.”

— Annette Aguirre-Ponce, Texas

Neighbors agree that stigma and shame are roadblocks to accessing food assistance programs like SNAP.

92% said policies must support people in creating solutions that work for their communities.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

All people should always have access to the fundamental resources, like food, needed to reach their full potential. Feeding America recommends the following policies, informed by our neighbors’ insights, to increase access to food.

- The USDA should support innovative food access and transportation solutions, including funding for food delivery interventions, food lockers and mobile food distributions.
- Congress and USDA should support the expansion of SNAP online shopping and continue to add more online retailers and states to the program, providing particular support to small and mid-sized retailers and those serving hard-to-reach areas.
- Congress should improve and simplify access to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, allowing more schools to offer free meals to all students by expanding community eligibility and increasing opportunities to directly certify children for free meals. Ninety-one percent of neighbors surveyed said if Congress passes policies to reduce hunger and food insecurity, it is important that these policies make it possible for all children, regardless of their family’s income, to get healthy meals if they need them.
- Congress should ensure all eligible families have access to Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits by expanding eligibility, streamlining and extending certification, and supporting the continued integration of technology to modernize service delivery (such as expanding online shopping in WIC). Ninety-four percent of neighbors surveyed said WIC is an important program for reducing hunger and food insecurity.
- The 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.
- The USDA should support more rural development grants and funds to expand access to food for neighbors who live far from charitable food assistance sites or grocery stores.
- Congress should increase TEFAP funding for food purchases, storage and distribution costs, and infrastructure grants through the 2023 Farm Bill.
- Congress should provide more flexibility for summer meal programs for children, including streamlining regulations and lowering the area eligibility requirement to serve rural communities better.
- Congress should support military families experiencing food insecurity by removing the Basic Allowance for Housing from the gross income calculation for SNAP eligibility and the eligibility calculation of the Basic Needs Allowance. Ninety percent of neighbors surveyed agreed that no one serving in the military—whether active military, veterans or their families—should have to deal with hunger and food insecurity.
- Congress and the administration should bolster food security efforts based at Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals and focus on the root causes of hunger among veterans. Congress should also create a transitional SNAP benefit for service members separating from the military.
- Congress should provide services tailored to seniors, including food delivery to people facing transportation or mobility challenges.
- Congress should reauthorize and streamline the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) to further improve the food security and health of seniors.
Economic policies that create jobs and support financial well-being can have a major impact on food insecurity. The sunsetting of policies created to alleviate the worst impacts of the pandemic is being felt by many neighbors. They urge policymakers to expand economic opportunity for all.

During and beyond the height of the pandemic, the federal government implemented several assistance programs to help individuals and families weather economic uncertainty and food insecurity, including increased SNAP benefits (i.e., “emergency allotments”), waivers and expanded eligibility for some nutrition programs, and the expanded Child Tax Credit. These programs were sunset amid headlines of the economy improving, but neighbors emphasized that people are still working to overcome difficulties accessing food, reflecting the need for economic well-being across all communities.

Year after year, the problems that people facing hunger are navigating while also working hard to put food on their tables are largely unchanged. This year, neighbors emphasized that, in addition to challenges obtaining groceries, many faced barriers accessing other necessities such as housing, health care, transportation and child care. Prohibitively high prices and the meager availability of support services and well-paying jobs converge to keep many of these additional basic needs out of reach for many neighbors. People facing hunger consistently elevate the need to invest in long-term economic resilience to protect communities from food insecurity—not just stopgaps during increased economic precarity. Neighbors are seeking self-sufficiency in an America where everyone has the resources and opportunity to thrive.
INSIGHTS FROM PEOPLE FACING HUNGER

A significant number of neighbors—67%—named high inflation and rising food costs as among the top factors contributing to food insecurity, including Donnette McManus from Massachusetts. Overnight, Donnette became the parent of four children after her sister passed away and she took in her three daughters. She said she never thought she would need help with food, but with four children and high prices, she has experienced food insecurity.

“Even though you have your list, you have your budget, things are changing so quickly. Your salary can’t keep up. So, you get to the store with the same exact list, the same 10 items can cost you 50% more.”

— Donnette McManus, Massachusetts

After inflation and rising food costs, neighbors said the high cost of rent or buying a home (55%), losing a job and being unemployed (44%) and too many low-wage jobs (42%) are also related to the root causes of food insecurity—further demonstrating that it will take more than food to end hunger in America. It requires economic security for all.

“My mom became ill, and it was an end-of-life experience for her. I dropped everything. I took care of her in the hospital, I brought her to my home. In a state of exhaustion, I took a nosedive down my basement stairs. It took two years to get properly diagnosed, and because of my age, healing was interrupted. On a dime, life changed. Over the next two years, I lost my business, lost family friends, people didn’t understand what was wrong with me because I still looked the same but I couldn’t open my own mail, I couldn’t fill out a form. I could not be on my computer.”

— Elayne Masters, Pennsylvania
POLSIC
RECOMMENDATIONS

Ending hunger requires ensuring people have more financial support to put food on the table—an effort that will take an intersectional, comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness, creating jobs in communities that are under-resourced, broadening health care coverage and more. Guided by neighbor voices, Feeding America proposes transformative policies that will build better pathways to economic well-being.

- Congress should adequately fund and improve state employment and training programs, ensure SNAP recipients are offered training opportunities that align with best practices and remove the time limit on SNAP benefits to support participants as they find work. For people who are temporarily unemployed, SNAP is one of the few resources available for receiving food support during a job search.

- Congress should permanently expand the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. The 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit together lifted more children above the poverty line than any other economic support program.

- Congress should invest in policies to address high housing costs, including policies that will provide more affordable housing in communities, additional housing aid and oversight programs for landlords.

- Congress should improve the SNAP benefit-taper structure to reduce the “benefits cliff.” Raising income thresholds to gradually phase out benefits as individuals receiving SNAP benefits begin to earn more income will provide people with more stability on the path toward self-sufficiency. Ninety-one percent of neighbors surveyed felt that if Congress passes policies to reduce hunger and food insecurity, it is important that these policies make it possible for middle-income people to qualify for assistance, because they sometimes struggle too.

- Congress and the administration should address the unique food security challenges faced by immigrant communities, including the current five-year waiting period for certain immigrants to access Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.
As the majority of neighbors said both last year and this year, the movement to end hunger must be anchored in improving access to and affordability of not just any foods but nutritious foods that meet dietary needs and prevent and manage diet-related diseases.

Despite understanding the importance of consuming healthy food, many neighbors told us the challenges with receiving nutritious meals have continued from 2022 into 2023, sometimes intensifying. Even as the nation sees inflation begin to trend down, neighbors still feel left behind with no help—leaving many to experience the negative effects of food insecurity on their health and the quality of their daily lives.

Seventy-nine percent of survey participants said they skipped or delayed other needs—such as seeing a doctor, filling a medication prescription and paying for health insurance—to afford food for themselves and their families at some point during the last two years. Being forced to sacrifice basic needs to afford groceries comes with enduring costs, and neighbors said they are fully aware of the short-, medium- and long-term effects of eating cheaper foods that are low in nutritional value. They see the impact of food insecurity on their lives, with 46% of neighbors reporting they don’t feel as healthy as they want to and 39% saying that, even though they want to eat more healthily, they cannot afford to do so right now.

“...I do manual labor jobs, I'm a mover. I have to have a lot of high protein, a lot of meat, and a lot of eggs. Those things are high in price. I have six kids, it’s either I take out of my mouth and give to them or take out of their mouth to feed me. I can’t do that because they’re growing. It’s the stress of your mind going and going thinking, ‘How can I provide for them?’ I’m insecure not knowing if I’m able to perform my job effectively if I’m not eating as well. Food insecurities make your body like that.”

— Darren Brown, Texas

93% of neighbors surveyed agreed that “food is medicine,” and you will feel better physically, emotionally and mentally if you have regular access to healthy foods.
Neighbors also reported that food pantries and grocery stores in under-resourced areas often do not have an adequate supply of fresh, healthy food at affordable prices. Limited public transportation options compound problems with accessing nourishing food.

Additionally, many neighbors noted how difficult it is for seniors to access the programs designed to help them. Senior hunger can be especially devastating, as it puts older individuals at risk for chronic health conditions like depression, asthma and diabetes. In sum, building hunger-free communities nationwide is important to building healthier communities.

Growing up on the Navajo Reservation and later in Wyoming, my family’s always been very strong advocates for helping your neighbors and supporting one another. ...Over the past year, I got the awesome opportunity to become the food sourcing manager for Wyoming, and it’s been a lot trying to travel around and get food locally sourced in Wyoming. It’s been challenging because we don’t have a lot of fresh produce in Wyoming.”

— Odessa Oldham, Colorado

79% said they skipped or delayed other needs—such as seeing a doctor, filling a medication prescription and paying for health insurance—to afford food for themselves and their families at some point during the last two years.

“...I’ve talked to people in rural communities, talking about how they don’t have access to fresh foods. Maybe we can incentivize farmers markets to come out and allow rural areas to have fresh, healthy food. At the end of the day, these people know what needs to change because they are experiencing the pain of these things not being changed.”

— Jacqueline Benitez, California
Hunger and health are inextricably linked, thus necessitating that policymakers tackle food insecurity to improve health outcomes across the nation. Rooted in learnings from neighbors, Feeding America advocates implementing policies that will help ensure more people in America can live full, healthy lives.

• Congress should support and fund produce prescription initiatives through U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) programs. Produce prescription programs allow physicians to immediately provide patients with diet-related diseases—as well as people facing hunger generally—with fresh produce and other nutritious foods to improve these patients’ health.

• HHS should explore ways to work with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to expand coverage for produce prescription programs in hospitals, federally qualified health centers, grocery stores and farmers markets, as well as to provide technical assistance and other guidance.

• Congress should support and provide funding for food pantries located in health care settings. These pantries help medical staff immediately provide healthy food to patients facing hunger who are also at risk of readmission for nutrition-related reasons.
Over half of the neighbors we heard from (57%) told us they are only getting by instead of thriving. When asked about their aspirations for the kind of lives they want, food and economic security rise to the top: Forty-four percent of neighbors told us they want improved access to healthy, affordable foods, and 43% of neighbors aim to save enough money to pass onto their loved ones.

People facing hunger know what they want and need in the future—and they know how to get there. The call to action from neighbors remains clear, echoing what Feeding America heard in 2022: To end hunger and make sure everyone has the food they need to thrive, we need the government, the private sector, the nonprofit sector, local institutions like schools and churches, and communities to work together. Neighbors are falling through the cracks of federal nutrition programs, and they continue to weather an uneven economic recovery while experiencing hurdles accessing and affording healthful foods. A united front, with people facing hunger in the vanguard, is critical to the movement to end hunger.

Feeding America believes no one wants to end hunger more than neighbors who tackle it every day—and no one knows better than they how to accomplish this. That is why their voices are critical to informing anti-hunger policies and programs that alleviate people’s immediate needs for nourishing food while addressing the related issues that impact food insecurity, such as the cost of living, housing and employment. The path toward full-scale food security means resolving multiple issues together—not just curing the symptoms of hunger in siloes.

We know food insecurity is complex. But to end hunger now and forever is a choice America can and must make. And it is solvable when we are united and standing alongside our neighbors facing hunger.

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“Seguimos en no rindiéndonos, en ser parte del movimiento, en ser parte de la de buscar estos recursos, de estar involucrados para también progresar en el futuro.”

(“We are determined not to give up, to be part of the movement, to be part of the search for resources, to be involved in order to also progress in the future.”)

— Jovita Francisco Morales, Minnesota

“The bridge between the desperate need and the liftoff to support yourself—there is so much support needed there to taper people off to really support them to independence. That’s something that could be so beneficial to support people as they move out of food insecurity to give them a bridge to success.”

— Alicia Slawson, Virginia
Join the movement to end hunger at FeedingAmerica.org/ElevatingVoices

About Feeding America

Feeding America is committed to an America where no one is hungry. We support tens of millions of people who experience food insecurity to get the food and resources they say they need to thrive as part of a nationwide network of food banks, statewide food bank associations, food pantries and meal programs. We also invest in innovative solutions to increase equitable access to nutritious food, advocate for legislation that improves food security and work to address factors that impact food security, such as housing, health, cost of living, and employment.

We partner with people experiencing food insecurity, policymakers, organizations and supporters united with them in a movement to end hunger. Visit FeedingAmerica.org to learn more.

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