



BE A VOICE SUMMARY: FOOD INSECURITY

All Be A Voice Health and Human Service Advocacy Toolkit sections are on the advocacy page listed on the bottom of this summary.

BACKGROUND:

- In the United States, more than 38 million people live in poverty. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that more than 54 million people (including 18 million children) may experience food insecurity in 2020. Food insecurity is not about a lack of food. Rather, food insecurity is an issue of poverty and the structural inequities that place barriers to alleviate it.
- Access to affordable nutritious food is a key social determinant of health and impacts one's entire well-being. Adults who are food insecure are at an increased risk of developing chronic diseases, or having their illnesses worsen. Children who are food insecure are at risk for developmental issues. Food insecurity is connected to other social determinants of health, such as access to housing, medical care, childcare, and transportation — particularly when the costs of one, or more, compete with the others.
- A new report, "From Disparities to Discrimination: Getting at the Roots of Food Insecurity in America," shows a relationship between racial discrimination and food insecurity. People who experience discrimination are almost twice as likely to struggle with hunger, and people of color are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity (22 percent of Black households, 18 percent of Latinx households, less than 9 percent of White households). Discrimination in school, hiring, work, public settings, and interactions with law enforcement are all associated with household food insecurity.

CURRENTLY:

- The pandemic has driven the inaccessibility of food, especially healthy food. Since grocery hours are more limited, crowded indoor spaces are potentially hazardous, and public transportation has been curtailed, many people aren't able to access groceries. Food deserts are getting bigger, and food is getting more expensive.
- To address the immediate need, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or "food stamps," needs increased support. This direct assistance not only helps recipients purchase food and extend their grocery budget, it helps fuel economic activity: everyone in the supply chain benefits, from farmers to grocery clerks to people who help transport food.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES:

- What plans do you have to increase the number of grocery stores in settings that currently have limited food access, and disproportionately impact our communities of color?
- Many of the people who work in foodservice or who are farm workers can't afford the food that they help produce. In what ways are you making access to food more equitable?
- How would you propose to shore up the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program so that it remains nimble and flexible to address economic crises and hardship?
- 1 in 4 children will go hungry this year: what do we do now so that those kids are fed? What do we also do so that future generations don't have to go hungry?