

Policy Agenda 2023

Vision: A hunger-free community

Mission: Lead our community to ensure that anyone who needs a healthy meal can get one

Policy Principles:

Access to healthy food is a human right.

Food is foundational to community health and economic stability.

All children should receive free school meals.

Free meals at school and in childcare settings creates equity and community by ensuring that every child has the nutrition they need to learn and to thrive. Sustainable government funding should allow schools and childcare providers to serve healthy meals.

Policies should be evaluated for their impact on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Systemic racism is embedded in many long-standing policies and programs. We are committed to examining systems, policies and practices to ensure that they support racial and ethnic diversity and provide equity and inclusion for all.

Community voice matters.

Second Harvest will support nonpartisan efforts at the local, state and federal levels to increase access to voting and encourage voter registration.



School and Summer Meals:

School meals ensure that all children are nourished so they are ready to learn and thrive. We will advocate at the state and federal levels to provide adequate funding for nutrition departments and pathways to train new nutrition staff so that schools can provide healthy meals to every child.

- **Universal School Meals:** At the federal level, we will advocate for a Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill which includes expansion of free school meal programs to all students.
- **California State Support of Universal School Meals:** Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, California became the first state to provide two free meals to K-12 students. In order for this program to be a sustainable, successful model for other states to follow, we will advocate for additional funding, infrastructure, support for a sustainable workforce and flexible administration.
- **Summer and After-School Meal Support:** When schools are closed, students still need access to nutrition. We will advocate for solutions to fill in meal gaps such as strengthening Summer EBT and expanding areas where summer meal programs can be operated.



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CalFresh / Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

CalFresh provides funds for food on an electronic benefit card (EBT) to low-income Californians and helps address systemic food insecurity issues, which disproportionately impact people of color. For every meal provided by food banks, nine are provided through CalFresh. CalFresh needs to be strengthened and made more accessible at both the state and federal level. We will advocate for a robust Farm Bill which improves this program's ability to reduce hunger for all low-income people.



- **Increase Benefits:** As inflation drives food prices higher, we will advocate for the USDA to increase SNAP benefits to match family food needs more closely. This is especially important in high cost of living areas like ours where the federal poverty guidelines do not match the reality of a household's financial stability.
- **Inclusion:** We will advocate for a CalFresh program which meets the needs of all those who need food assistance. This includes advocating for a federal ban on states excluding those reentering their communities after incarceration. Additionally, we will advocate for low-income college students so that attending college full-time meets the work requirement.
- **Access:** We will advocate for a CalFresh application process that is not burdensome by increasing access to benefits online, in person and by phone. We will advocate for improved options for ordering food online and expanding access to hot, prepared foods for all CalFresh recipients, including prepared meals sold at grocery store delis.
- **Food4All:** The California Food Assistance Program will soon be expanded to all low-income immigrants age 55+. We will advocate for this important, innovative food assistance program to be expanded to all age ranges.

Creating a More Equitable Food System:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the multitude of risks faced by essential workers and the fragility of our supply chains. At the same time, climate change has caused unprecedented wildfires, drought and more. We will advocate for advancing economic recovery by investing in resilient and reliable regional food systems, including:

- Protecting workers in our fields, kitchens and grocery stores.
- Addressing long-standing inequities in our food system by directing resources to farmers, ranchers and communities of color that have historically been excluded from many state and federal programs.
- At the City and County level, we will work with governmental agencies and nonprofit partners to expand equitable access to nutrition support. We will advocate for a county-wide plan to coordinate food access for our unhoused neighbors and build our region's capacity to address food insecurity in future crises.



Food Rescue:

Second Harvest is the leader in edible food recovery in our two counties. Food rescued from food generators, wholesalers and grocery stores provides variety and nutrition to our clients while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are active in the implementation of SB 1383, which will require major food generators and distributors to donate more of their surplus, quality food. To make this sustainable for the long term, we will advocate for investment at the county and state levels to support the infrastructure needed to enable additional food rescue as well as ongoing operational support.

Support of Food Banks:

To get nutritious food into the hands of those who need it, food banks need a consistent source of food and funding at the federal and state levels.

- **Federal Support:** The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is an important source of food and funding for food banks nationwide. We will advocate for strong TEFAP support in Farm Bill negotiations – a win for U.S. farmers, food banks, and our clients.
- **State Support:** California's support of food banks through CalFood is vital to a strong safety net. Given the continuing high level of food insecurity, and the fact that federal support has lagged, we will advocate for \$60M in ongoing annual state funding for the CalFood program.

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