

SUPPORT MINNESOTA'S HUNGER RELIEF NETWORK

February 25, 2026

Dear Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

As food banks and food shelves on the front lines of the ongoing hunger crisis facing our state, we write with one voice to express our strong support for HF3624 (Coulter), which would increase base funding for the Minnesota Food Shelf Program by \$5.4 million, and HF3586 (Gander), which would create a new Regional Food Bank Program to increase the amount of food available at no cost to food shelves throughout the state.

According to 2025 survey data from Second Harvest Heartland, 1 in 5 families in our state cannot afford the food they need without assistance. This led to more than 9 million food shelf visits in 2025 – setting a new record for the fourth consecutive year -- according to annual data collected by The Food Group. Minnesota's hunger-relief network is strong and resilient, but we were not designed to sustain this level of need for such a long period of time, and many of us are nearing a breaking point as a result.

HF3624 would help food shelves on the front lines of hunger relief by bringing the base funding level for the longstanding Minnesota Food Shelf Program in line with current needs, avoiding an effective cut in funding after several years of emergency one-time appropriations. These funds provide needed flexibility to food shelves to address their most acute needs, whether purchasing food or equipment or hiring staff.

HF3586 would create a new Regional Food Bank Program to assist the five food banks serving Minnesota and participating Tribal Nations in sourcing and delivering more food at no cost to food shelves and food distribution programs throughout the state. Unlike most states, Minnesota does not currently provide funding to food banks to support purchasing, despite the critical role they play as the primary source of food for Minnesota's food shelves.

Food banks and food shelves are doing the critical work of keeping Minnesotans fed, but resources have not kept up with demand. That means that there is simply not enough food available for Minnesotans who need it today. These bills would help address that imbalance, infusing the hunger relief network with tens of millions of pounds of fresh, nutritious, and often locally sourced food. In divided times, ensuring everyone can eat should be a unifying goal.

Thank you for your leadership and your support.

Sincerely,

(see next page)

Food Shelves

360 Communities, Burnsville
A Better Road Foundation, St. Paul
A Place for Hope: Recovery and Wellness Center & Food Shelf, Moorhead
Anoka County Brotherhood Council Inc (ACBC), Anoka
Basic Needs Food Market, Cottage Grove
Battle Lake Food Shelf/First National Bank, Battle Lake
Bountiful Basket Food Shelf, Chaska and Cologne
Bread of Life Food Shelf, Minneapolis
Bricelyn Food Pantry, Bricelyn
Bridgepointe Community Church Food Pantry, Moorhead
Calvary Food Shelf, Minneapolis
Campus Cupboard, Minneapolis
Canasta Familiar, St. Paul
CAPI USA, Brooklyn Center
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud, St. Cloud
CES Food Market, Minneapolis
Channel One Food Shelf, Rochester
Comet's Cupboard, St. Paul
Community Emergency Assistance Programs, Brooklyn Center
Community Pathways of Steele County, Owatonna
CROSS Services, Rogers
East Side Neighborhood Services, Minneapolis
Fishes and Loaves Food Shelf /Progressive Baptist Church, St. Paul
Foundation for Essential Needs, Minneapolis
Garrison Area Caregivers, Garrison
Gather and Grow Food Shelf, Waconia & Watertown
Glendale Food Shelf, Minneapolis
Great Is Thy Faithfulness, Minneapolis
Hallie Q Brown Community Center, St. Paul
Hastings Family Service, Hastings
Hope for the Community, Blaine
ICA Food Shelf, Minnetonka
Interfaith Outreach, Plymouth
Joyce Uptown Food Shelf, Minneapolis
Keystone Community Services, St. Paul
La Crescent Food Shelf, La Crescent
Laporte Community Food Shelf, Laporte
Lonsdale Area Food Shelf, Lonsdale
MCCC Food Shelf, Minneapolis
McGregor Area Food Shelf, McGregor
McLeod Food Shelf, Glencoe
Mi CASA MN, Shakopee
Monticello Help Center, Monticello
NCBC Food Shelf, Minneapolis
Neighborhood House, St. Paul
Neighborhood Pantry, Inc, St. James
Neighbors United Resource Center Food Shelf, Granite Falls
Neighbors, Inc., South St. Paul
Norway Community Association Food Shelf, St. Paul
Open Cupboard, Oakdale
Pillsbury United Communities/Brian Coyle Center/Waite House Food Shelves, Minneapolis
Red Wing Area Food Shelf, Red Wing
Saint Andrew's Community Resource Center, Mahtomedi
Second Harvest Northland Food Shelf, Duluth
Shiloh Cares Food Shelf- Northside Community Safety Resource Center, Minneapolis
Sibley County Foodshare, Gaylord
Simpson Food Pantry, Minneapolis
The Harbor Food Shelf at Faith Lutheran, Coon Rapids
The Open Door, Eagan
The Sanneh Foundation, St. Paul
Thief River Falls Area Food Shelf, Thief River Falls
Tri-Community Food Shelf, Cromwell
United Way of Freeborn County/United Way Welcome Pantry, Albert Lea
Wells Area Food Shelf, Wells
Vadnais Heights Community Food Program/Lions Club Foundation, Vadnais Heights
Valley Outreach, Stillwater
White Bear Area Food Shelf, White Bear Lake
Zumbro Valley Food Shelf, Zumbro Falls

Food Banks

Channel One Food Bank, Rochester
North Country Food Bank, East Grand Forks
Second Harvest Northland, Duluth
Second Harvest Heartland, Brooklyn Park
The Food Group, New Hope



February 2026

Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

The undersigned organizations urge you to **support HF1148 (Coulter), a bill that appropriates \$1 million one-time for a prepared meals grant program which would deliver an estimated 750,000 prepared meals each year to Minnesotans in need.** The prepared meals programs supported by this legislation would benefit Minnesotans who experience both food insecurity and the inability to reliably cook for themselves, whether due to disability, chronic illness, limited mobility, a family crisis, and/or lack of access to a kitchen.

There is a great need for the ongoing funding for a state prepared meals grant program included in this bill. One-time appropriations in 2024 and again in 2025 (total \$4.3 million) supported eight organizations and one tribal nation to launch prepared meal programs across the state, a fraction of the initial applicants and illustration of the need for prepared meal funding in Minnesota. These programs often reach individuals who face the greatest barriers to consistently accessing and preparing food for themselves and their households; seniors and older adults, people living with disabilities, or those facing immediate hardships and illnesses, helping maintain stability and reducing strain on other local resources.

Current funding expires in June of this year, and the elimination or reduction of programs would mean increased pressure on Minnesota's hunger relief network at an extremely unfortunate time. Prepared meals play a critical role in the hunger relief system, and demand has increased amid rising food insecurity rates across

Minnesota and the state set to experience another record-breaking year for food assistance needs.

In 2025 alone, Fairview received over 31,000 patients who screened positive for food insecurity. Second Harvest Heartland's Kitchen Coalition program distributed 1.3 million prepared meals using privately raised funds, but that served a fraction of our neighbors who needed them. Food banks and food shelves are working around the clock to address the dramatic and unsustainable increase in demand for food assistance, but they cannot do it alone. According to new data, **1 in 5 Minnesota families are experiencing food insecurity.**

Hunger is also a statewide challenge, with food insecurity rates at record highs and virtually identical across the state. Supporting HF 1148 (Coulter) would help provide an effective, tested, and transparent statewide response. Appropriating ongoing, annual funding for the prepared meals program would help ensure tens of thousands of Minnesotans have the food they need, and we urge this Committee's support for it and other bipartisan, long-term solutions to ending hunger in our state.

Thank you,

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

Channel One Food Bank

Fairview

Kitchen Coalition

Minnesota Community Action Partnership

Open Arms of Minnesota

Partners to End Hunger Coalition

Prairie Five Community Action

The Sanneh Foundation

Second Harvest Heartland

HUNGER RELIEF

FACT SHEET

What's The Difference Between a Food Bank and a Food Shelf?



Food Bank

A food bank sources, safely stores, and distributes millions of pounds of food annually to food shelves and local food distribution programs. (Think: wholesaler)

Over 80% of the food available at food shelves across Minnesota comes from a regional food bank.



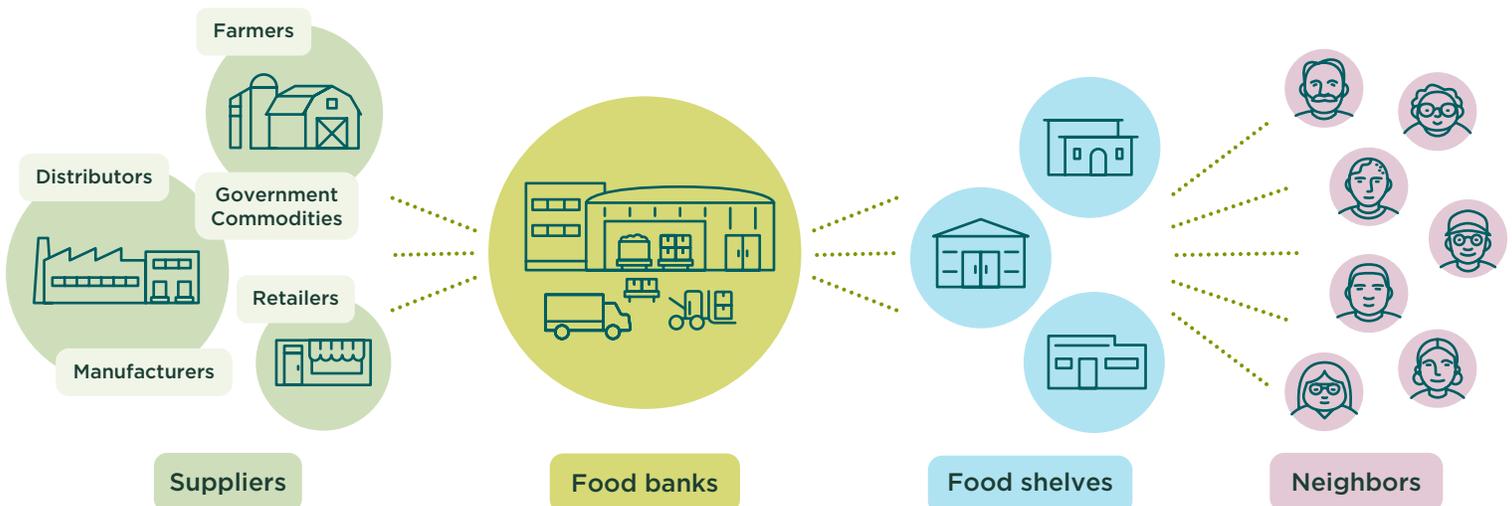
Food Shelf

A food shelf (sometimes called a food pantry or agency partner) is an emergency food distribution center where hungry families can receive food at no cost. (Think: retailer)

Anyone can receive food by self-declaring that their household income is at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and that they are physically present in MN.

Where Does The Food Come From?

Food banks receive food from a variety of places. The role of the food bank is to handle all of the incoming food (whether physically or through facilitation) and get it to food shelves and other partners in the hunger-relief network or directly to neighbors.



State And Federal Food Assistance Programs

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

A federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides USDA foods (“commodities”) to states, which is then allocated to food banks and distributed to TEFAP-eligible food shelves.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

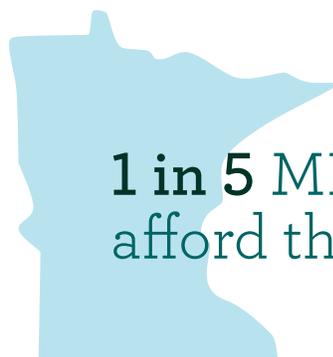
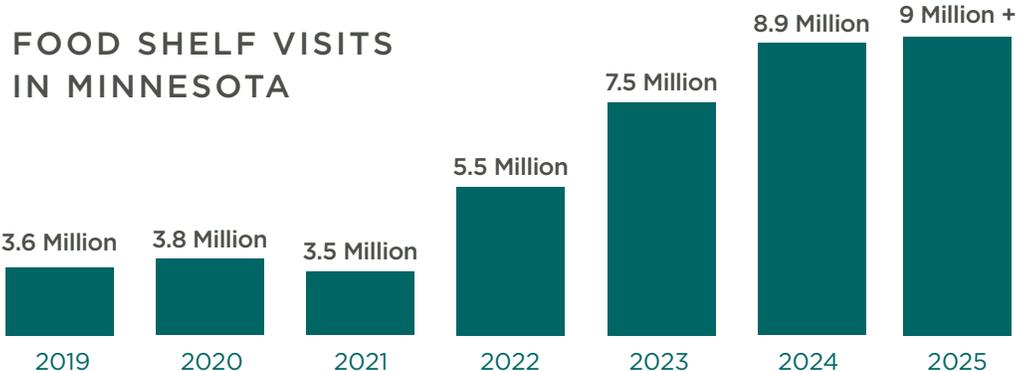
Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is the largest federal anti-hunger program in the United States, providing monthly funds via an EBT card to eligible low-income individuals and families for buying groceries.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

Also known as senior nutrition boxes, CSFP is a federal program that provides monthly boxes of nutritious, USDA-purchased foods to eligible low-income individuals aged 60+ to supplement food needs and improve health.

The Minnesota Food Shelf Program (MFSP)

A state-funded grant program that provides flexible annual financial support to food shelves and Tribal Nations to help them purchase food, upgrade equipment or infrastructure, cover administrative costs, or meet other operational needs.



1 in 5 MN families can't afford the food they need.

MEASURING FOOD INSECURITY IN MINNESOTA

In 2024, Second Harvest Heartland partnered with Wilder Research to conduct the first-ever statewide hunger survey and meet the need for more timely and accurate data about Minnesota’s growing hunger problem. With the end of federal data collection on hunger as of 2025, continuing our survey has become crucial to understanding what’s happening in our state. Our most recent findings show evidence of a worsening problem, especially among the state’s already-vulnerable households.

1 in 5 Minnesota households can’t afford the food they need

32% of households with children are food insecure

20% of households rely on the emergency food system

THE FOOD SECURITY SCALE

To get a clearer picture of hunger in Minnesota, we developed the Food Security Scale, which describes four stops along the way from hunger to full food security (*see right*). The emergency food system supports families at the second and third stops through direct food distributions such as food shelves and hunger-relief programs like SNAP. While we and our food shelf partners are always adjusting to meet the growing need, we’re also working on solutions for long-term stability. It will require a whole community effort to help more Minnesota households afford the food they need.



STOP 1: FOOD INSECURE

NO HELP

Households not receiving help from the emergency food system, do not have enough food



STOP 2: FOOD INSECURE

SOME HELP

Households receiving some help from the emergency food system, still do not have enough food



STOP 3: FOOD INSECURE

ENOUGH HELP

Households receiving help from the emergency food system, have enough food



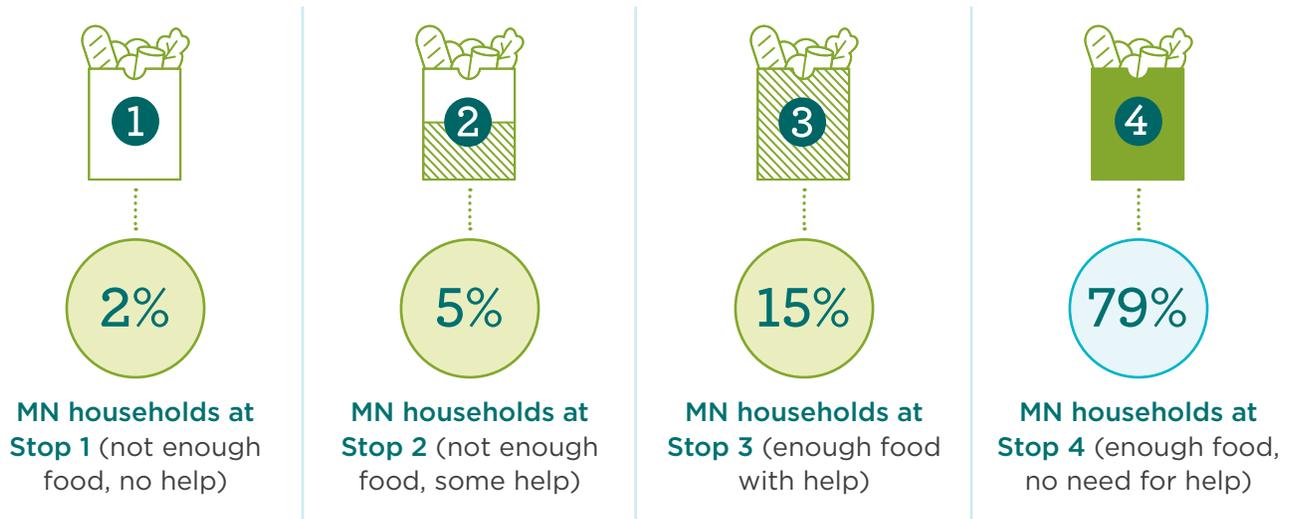
STOP 4: FOOD SECURE

NO NEED FOR HELP

Households that have enough food without any help from the emergency food system

WHERE MN HOUSEHOLDS FALL ON THE FOOD SECURITY SCALE

Our 2025 survey found that **22% of Minnesota households cannot afford the food they need**. 2% of households are at Stop 1, 5% are at Stop 2, and 15% are at Stop 3 (*percentages reflect rounding*). There are more food-insecure households compared to the previous year—meaning fewer Minnesotans are able to afford the food they need.

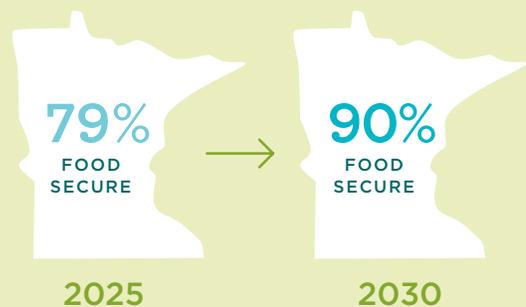


IMPROVING STABILITY

Household stability is about more than just food: housing, job security, wages, and overall health all contribute to our ability to thrive. In a troubling insight, we found that **42% of Minnesota households are concerned about their level of stability**. This percentage is greater among households that are food insecure. So while we work to provide food and resources to address hunger in the moment, we're also focused on improving household stability in the longer term. We are dedicated to working in partnership with community leaders, legislators, and other nonprofits to assist impacted communities.

MAKE HUNGER HISTORY

We are leading a bold initiative to reduce hunger, aiming to make 90% of MN households food secure by 2030.



LEARN MORE

Scan the code or go to 2harvest.org/makehungerhistory to learn more about our research, our work, and our commitment to making hunger history in MN.





Protect SNAP

for Families and Financial Stability
for Minnesota's Counties

Association of
Minnesota Counties



MACSSA
Minnesota Association of County
Social Service Administrators

SNAP Provides Essential Food Assistance Across Minnesota

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program that provides food assistance to low-income individuals and households, reducing food insecurity and improving nutrition for Minnesotans statewide.

SNAP is a federal entitlement program, yet the OBBBA/H.R.1 includes significant policy changes and cost shifts from the federal government to states. These changes threaten the stability of SNAP nationwide and, in Minnesota, pose serious risks to county budgets without legislative protections. Shifting costs to counties would have devastating impacts on local budgets and services, force property tax increases, and undermine counties' ability to deliver Health and Human Services on behalf of the state. Minnesota counties urge lawmakers to act now to protect SNAP program stability and prevent county taxpayers from bearing the burden of federal cost shifts.

440,000 Minnesotans
use **SNAP** each month



SNAP Benefit Amount:
About **\$6** per person per day

New SNAP Cost Shifts for Minnesota in 2026-2027

SNAP Benefit Cost Shift

Under the new law, Minnesota is now responsible for paying for a share of the SNAP benefits that individuals receive, with the exact amount to be determined by the state's "payment error rate."

- **Effective date: October 1, 2027** (based on FY 2025 or FY 2026 error rates).
- **Estimated cost to state = \$97M annually**

SNAP benefits have been paid in full by the federal government throughout the program's 50-year history.

SNAP Administrative Cost Shift

Minnesota is also now required to pay 75% of SNAP administrative costs, up from the current 50% administrative funding.

- **Effective date: October 1, 2026**
- **Estimated lost federal revenue = \$38M annually**

Additional SNAP Costs

- **Estimated by MMB = \$10M annually**
- **SNAP Administrative Reimbursements to Tribal Nations = \$1M annually**

Total SNAP Cost Shifts = \$145 million

Minnesota Faces Major Cuts in Federal Funding for the SNAP Program

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA/H.R.1) makes several major changes to federal funding for SNAP (see graphic at left).

In addition to these funding cost shifts, SNAP recipients will also see other changes, including expanded work requirements and limits on eligibility for noncitizens.

Counties Cannot Afford to Shoulder New SNAP Cost Shifts

Minnesota is one of only a handful of states where counties administer the SNAP program. However, counties have never been responsible for directly paying benefits, and shifting both SNAP benefit and administrative costs to counties would be unsustainable for property taxpayers. Minnesota should follow the lead of other states and assume these costs at the state level, rather than shifting them to counties.

We urge lawmakers to support the fiscal stability of Minnesota’s 87 counties by:

1 Capping County Administrative Responsibility at 50%

- The current 50% county cost-share for administrative expenses should be continued.
- Capping the county administrative cost-share at current levels would protect counties from a 25-point cost increase in expenses and prevent significant property tax pressure.

2 Assigning Benefit Cost-Share (Payment Error Rate Related Costs) to the State

- SNAP is a federal entitlement program, and the actual benefit was never intended to be paid at the local level.
- The Payment Error Rate is driven by state systems and federal directives, and therefore the state should assume responsibility for any benefit cost-share triggered by OBBBA/HR1.

Protecting counties from the new SNAP cost shifts would ensure:

- Stable and consistent program delivery across all 87 counties.
- Protection from unpredictable federal sanctions.



We urge lawmakers to partner with counties on these statutory clarifications, which would preserve essential food assistance and protect county fiscal stability.

A Final Note

The State “Payment Error Rate”—What It Is and What It Isn’t

Beginning in FY 2028, the percentage of benefit costs a state must cover is determined by its most recent payment error rate (typically from FY 2025 or FY 2026 for the initial year).

SNAP Payment Error Rate (PER)	State Share of Benefit Costs
Less than 6.0%	0% (No cost to state)
6.0% to less than 8.0%	5%
8.0% to less than 10.0%	10%
10.0% or greater	15%

The new federal law links the amount states must pay in SNAP benefit costs to the state’s “Payment Error Rate” (PER). States must pay 0–15% of SNAP benefit costs according to each state’s individual error rate. Minnesota’s SNAP payment error rate was just under 9% in 2024.¹

Most payment errors result from **unintentional mistakes** during the eligibility determination process, which can result in either overpayment or underpayment of SNAP benefits. For example:

- A client forgets to provide updated income information when re-applying for SNAP benefits.
- A typo is made when new information is entered into an outdated technology system.
- Incomplete documentation is provided by an individual applying for SNAP.
- A misunderstanding takes place in understanding complex eligibility criteria with a new applicant.

Payment errors result primarily from resident confusion about eligibility rules, gaps in the systems that support efficient case processing and determining eligibility, and the lack of support and training to ensure workers can keep up with complex policy and documentation requirements. In fact, a single error can result in members of an entire household being counted as “payment errors,” even if that household is eligible for SNAP benefits.

Payment errors **do indicate unintentional mistakes** often rooted in complex eligibility requirements and outdated technology systems. Payment errors **do not provide evidence of bad intent** on the part of individual SNAP recipients or those assisting with their application and eligibility determinations.

Counties support efforts to reduce Minnesota’s error rate – in collaboration with the Legislature and state agency staff – with a focus on the factors contributing to these unintentional mistakes. Efforts should include greater systems integration, systems that support eligibility policy changes, and cultivating a trained workforce that is able to foster trusting relationships between clients and county staff.

February 2026

¹ The benefit cost will be based on the payment error rate data from preceding years. Starting in FY2028 (October 1, 2027), states must pay a portion of SNAP benefits based on the state’s FY2025 or FY2026 error rate. Starting in FY2029 and going forward, states’ payment rates will be based on the PER from three years prior.



February 25, 2026

Members of the House Children and Families Committee:

The Nourish MN Coalition is pleased to offer our collective **support for HF1148 (Coulter), a bill that appropriates ongoing funds for a prepared meals grant program which would deliver nutritious prepared meals to Minnesotans in need.** The prepared meals programs supported by this legislation would benefit Minnesotans who experience both food insecurity and the inability to reliably cook for themselves, whether due to disability, chronic illness, limited mobility, a family crisis, and/or lack of access to a kitchen.

There is a great need for the ongoing funding for a state prepared meals grant program included in this bill. The program was funded as a pilot in 2023, receiving \$3.3 million in one-time funds. In total, 33 eligible applicants applied for \$21.6 million in funding, yet only eight organizations received any funding. When this funding disappears in June, many of these organizations will have to scale back or discontinue their programs.

Food banks and food shelves are working around the clock to address the dramatic and unsustainable increase in demand for food assistance, but they cannot do it alone. According to new data, **1 in 5 Minnesota families are experiencing food insecurity.**

Hunger is also a statewide challenge, with food insecurity rates at record highs and virtually identical across the state. Supporting HF1148 (Coulter) would help provide an effective, tested, and transparent statewide response. Appropriating ongoing, annual funding for the prepared meals program would help ensure tens of thousands of Minnesotans have the food they need.

The Nourish MN Coalition envisions a Minnesota where everyone has the resources they need to thrive, and where everyone's basic needs are met. This legislation would move us closer to that goal, and it would make a meaningful impact on the people we serve. For that reason, we urge the Committee's support.

Sincerely,

Nourish MN Coalition

About us: Nourish MN is a coalition of Minnesota nonprofits and community partners who engage in a cross-sector approach to uplift commonsense ideas that reduce poverty, end hunger, increase mobility, and make housing, healthcare, and childcare affordable and accessible for all Minnesotans.



February 24, 2026

Children & Families Finance & Policy Committee
Nutrition Support & Food Assistance Programs

Dear Chairs Kotyza-Witthuhn, West, Members of the Children & Families Committee,

Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition (PN-3) represents providers and stakeholders from across the perinatal health, early learning, and child care sectors who support policies and programs aimed at ensuring infants, toddlers and families have the best start in life regardless of income, geography, or race.

Over 80% of the brain is developed by age 3. It's critical for families and caregivers to understand and have access to resources that support the healthy growth and development of babies—preconception through early childhood.

A family's access to food has long-term impacts on their children's health. Please invest in programs and opportunities that support pregnant people, toddlers and young children to gain access to healthy food and adequate nutrition for healthy brain development, disease prevention, and household stability.

- HF777 / SF1112: Food shelf program funding provided, and money appropriated
- HF45 / SF849: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Outreach Program funding provided, and money appropriated.
- HF1148 / SF1412: Prepared meals food grant program established, and money appropriated.
- HF3586 / SF3770: Regional food bank grant program established, and money appropriated.
- SC3756 -1: Minnesota supplemental nutrition assistance program established

Thank you for remembering infants, babies, toddlers, and families in your investments.

Alisha Porter,
Children's Defense Funds-MN, State Director
MN Prenatal to Three Coalition, Co-Chair

Nancy Jost,
Retired Early Childhood Advisor
MN Prenatal to Three Coalition, Co-Chair



February 24, 2026

Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN
RE: Support for HF45, HF1148, and HF777

Dear Co-Chairs West and Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the Committee,
My name is Ivette Izea-Martinez, Senior Officer of Advocacy at Greater Twin Cities United Way. For more than 135 years, our organization has worked to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities. We operate at the intersection of direct services, funding, and advocacy.

Through our statewide helpline 211, we continue to see significant increases in food-related needs. In 2024, we made 15,309 food-security referrals—a 4% increase from 2023—with sharp spikes across Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Anoka, and Dakota Counties. January 2026 alone saw increases ranging from nearly double to nearly four times previous averages, reflecting a rapidly escalating need across the region.

Metro Surge operations have further strained access to food, intensifying impacts on children, older adults, immigrant families who qualify for support, and vulnerable Minnesotans. At the same time, changes to SNAP eligibility have created new barriers, leaving families unsure whether they still qualify, how to access benefits, or how to navigate a complex system. Increased outreach and navigation support are essential.

HF45 strengthens SNAP outreach, HF1148 expands culturally responsive prepared meals, and HF777 stabilizes the statewide food shelf system. Together, these bills provide a comprehensive response to Minnesota's growing hunger crisis. We urge your full support for HF45, HF1148, and HF777. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to Minnesota families.

Sincerely,

Ivette Izea-Martinez
Sr. Program Officer-Advocacy
Greater Twin Cities United Way

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as “food stamps,” provides federal funding to help individuals and families purchase groceries and is the nation’s most effective anti-hunger program. **SNAP Outreach is a key connector to Minnesotan’s navigating the SNAP assistance process.**



440,000+

People in MN rely on SNAP



290,529

Minnesotans reached through SNAP outreach in FY2025



34,843

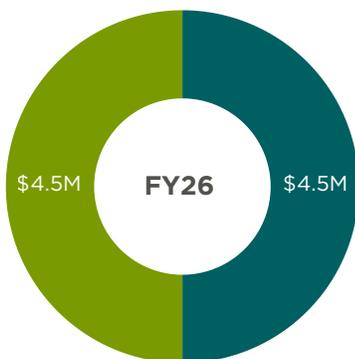
Applications/recertifications completed with support from SNAP Outreach in FY2025

The USDA SNAP Outreach Program supports the work of organizations across the state helping enroll eligible individuals in SNAP. HF45/SF849 (as amended) would restore lost SNAP Outreach funding resulting from HRI.

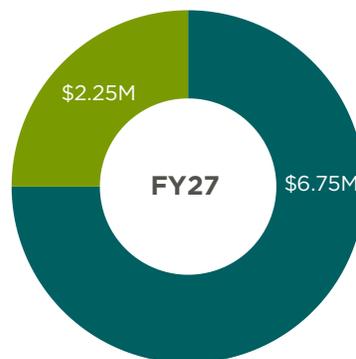
Prior to HRI, USDA provided a 50% reimbursement rate to eligible organizations for SNAP Outreach activities. **As of October 2026, USDA will only provide a 25% reimbursement**, creating a gap in funding during a time where more Minnesotans than ever are experiencing food insecurity.

Minnesota already provides \$500k to support SNAP Outreach activities. Investing an additional \$1.75 million ensures SNAP Outreach remains strong throughout the state, ensuring accurate benefits amounts, improving access to resources, and boosting the amount of federal SNAP dollars being spent in our local communities.

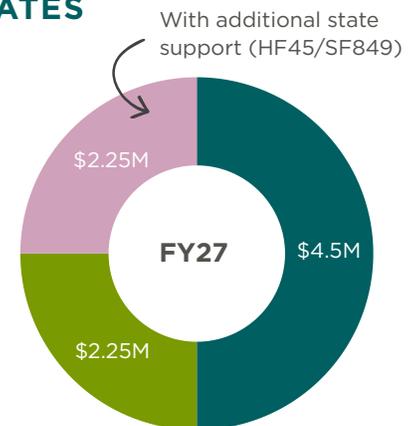
IMPACTS OF HRI ON OUTREACH REIMBURSEMENT RATES



- 50% Community Partners
- 50% Federal Government



- 75% Community Partners
- 25% Federal Government



- 50% Community Partners
- 25% Federal Government
- 25% State of Minnesota

WHY SUPPORT SNAP OUTREACH FUNDING?

High quality application assistance improves case accuracy, **helping reduce the Payment Error Rate (PER).**

SNAP helps **combat food insecurity**—one in five Minnesota households are food insecure. For every meal a food bank provides, SNAP provides nine.

Continuing support helps more Minnesotans connect with trusted community partners, supporting program compliance and effective communication on SNAP requirements.

SNAP Participant Testimonials

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Melissa Kay Sawyer Haynie, and this is my SNAP and food shelf story.

As a young girl, I remember going to discount and free food distributions. I remember waiting in line and when it came to our turn, there were two paper bags full of groceries with our name on it! I thought we had won the food lottery! No powder milk that evening! That food meant security and dignity.

Twenty-five years later, in 2017, I was working 60 hours a week as a self-employed hairstylist while attending school. I refused to take out student loans and worked to pay my tuition. After being hospitalized for acute appendicitis, I lost \$4,000 in income and had no money for food. Ashamed to ask for help, I went four days without eating.

I waited until everyone had gone for the day before asking the student life representative to visit my campus Food Cupboard. I knew it existed because I had donated to it before. They led me to the small room that had rows of staples, toiletry items, etc. I ended up getting rice, a box of crackers, and a can of chicken and dumpling soup. It was the best meal of my life.

Then a student worker helped me navigate and fill out the forms to apply for SNAP. I was awarded \$23 per month in SNAP benefits—enough to buy eggs and basic protein. That assistance kept me in school.

From that point forward, I became an advocate against hunger. I helped other students apply for SNAP and use campus food resources so they could stay in school. When students are hungry, they cannot succeed academically.

In fall 2021, I became pregnant and needed additional assistance. The application process was exhausting. After three applications and two caseworkers, I finally got support. My caseworker also connected me to a food shelf.

We had been surviving on rice, beans, and eggs for weeks. At the food shelf, I was overwhelmed by the fresh milk, meat, and diapers they provided. When a staff member gave me baby shampoo, I cried. I had been stretching what little I had to care for my newborn. That visit restored my hope.

Food is essential for people of all ages to thrive—not just survive. SNAP keeps refrigerators full and allows families to pay rent and utilities. Food shelves bridge the gaps that SNAP alone cannot cover. Even families with two full-time working parents are struggling in today's economy.

Please protect and strengthen food assistance programs. They keep students in school, families housed, and children nourished.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

Sincerely,

Melissa Kay Sawyer Haynie

SNAP Participant Testimonials

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Ronda Elstad. I'm 65 and have lived my entire life in Duluth, MN. I am on disability and receive SNAP benefits. Because I have a fixed income, I depend on these benefits for my living expenses. My SNAP is all I have to purchase food on my own. Rising prices and any food shortages put a strain on any food I can afford to buy. I already do without fruits and vegetables- depending on food shelves for that. If something is too expensive on my grocery list (like eggs), I do without. I cannot afford any cuts to what I receive in my SNAP benefits. Food prices are already affecting what I can afford to buy.

If these changes happened last year, that would've required me to find employment for 20 hours a week if not for my disability. Who is going to hire a senior? I really fear this is going to hit many seniors that I know hard – we already live with so many limitations and not everyone will be able to work or manage all the paperwork and technology. We all need SNAP to give us at least some sort of food security.

Ronda Elstad

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Holly and I wanted to share my story about the impact of SNAP and food shelf support throughout my life. Back in 1995, I was in a very rough place after enduring both physical and mental abuse in my childhood. I was struggling with my mental health and ended up homeless. It was at that time that I started receiving SNAP as a critical way for me to access food.

In 2000, I had my daughter which compelled me to start getting additional support. I wanted to break the cycle of abuse and give my children a better life. After many years of struggle, I ended up being able to access disability benefits. I also began utilizing food shelves to help supplement my food budget along with SNAP.

Both SNAP and food shelf support are critical to my wellbeing to this day. However, my food budget remains very tight. I consider my SNAP purchases very carefully to stretch my food budget along with what I can find at local food shelves. I am very careful to only take what I need and then shop for other essential items. I often cook in batches and stock up and freeze seasonal items like produce.

I may be protected from some of the recent changes to SNAP due to my disability, but I am still concerned about additional paperwork and my benefits keeping up with the cost of living over time. Even though the cost of things like food, rent and utilities keep going up, the way benefits are calculated often seems to leave me with less.

Holly

Good afternoon Chair Kotyza-Witthuhn and committee members,

My name is Madeleine Kinscher and I am a public health worker with years of work experience in food security. My testimony is not affiliated with my current or former employer. I am here today to ask you to support the MNSNAP bill.

SNAP is a critical program that feeds thousands of people in Minnesota. About 45% of all SNAP enrollment are in rural parts of the state where food insecurity rates are high and few food resources are available. In the metro, cost of living forces people to choose between food and other essentials. The loss of SNAP will deepen food insecurity in already insecure areas, bringing detrimental health impacts to Minnesota's communities.

Several years ago, I used to facilitate a local site for a statewide free food distribution program in Wisconsin. I served a small city and surrounding rural towns. I served SNAP users, but most folks were low income or income constrained but ineligible for government assistance. I remember giving food to people who lived 30 or more minutes away, a veteran who became disabled and couldn't work but had children, folks who primarily spoke Spanish, college students, and seniors who rely on social security. People of all walks of life. The elected officials they voted to represent at Wisconsin's Capitol are the same officials who voted to remove the funding to preserve a program that provided nutritious, high quality foods to their constituents' homes. My heart broke when I had to personally tell over 100 people that our program was ending because of this vote. The familiar feeling of heartbreak has now returned as I tell my community about the changes of SNAP and why it's happening.

I am asking for your support of the MNSNAP bill. Our system is already stretched thin trying to fulfill current hunger needs before HR1 had suddenly put thousands of more people at risk for food insecurity. All of us, especially you, play a critical role to prevent hunger in Minnesota.

Thank you for your time.



MINNESOTA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

1360 Energy Park Drive, Suite 110 • St. Paul, MN 55108 • 651-228-0973 • 1-800-966-8352 • mga@mngrocers.com

February 25, 2026

Co-Chairs Kotyza-Witthuhn and West, and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) would like to voice our support for enhanced state efforts to bolster the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Minnesota being considered in **HF45 (Perez-Vega)** and the **MNSNAP Proposal (Lee, X)**. Reductions to SNAP as passed in H.R. 1 will have serious and far-reaching consequences for program participants, local retailers, and communities across our state.

Minnesota is home to hundreds of hometown grocers and convenience stores - many of them independent, multi-generational, and deeply rooted in their communities. The MGA has represented this industry for more than 125 years and today includes over 250 member companies operating 1,300 locations statewide. Collectively, our industry supports more than 150,000 Minnesota jobs and plays an essential role in feeding families in every corner of the state.

Hunger is not a partisan issue. More than half of Minnesota's SNAP recipients live outside the metro area, underscoring the importance of this program in rural and greater Minnesota communities. Nationally, approximately **12 percent** of all grocery store spending comes from SNAP beneficiaries. In 2025, Minnesota SNAP recipients spent more than **\$859 million** with eligible retailers - dollars that directly support local businesses and the communities they serve.

Local grocers are under extraordinary financial pressure. Independent grocery stores operate on razor-thin margins - **approximately 1.7 percent in 2024** - while facing rising labor costs, increasing property taxes, soaring energy rates, and escalating theft and organized retail crime. SNAP cuts compound these challenges and accelerate store closures in both urban and rural settings.

When a grocery store closes, the consequences extend far beyond the business itself. Main Street suffers. Residents lose convenient access to fresh, healthy food. Food deserts expand - particularly in low-income and rural communities where alternative options may be limited or nonexistent.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to protect and strengthen SNAP as a cornerstone of Minnesota's fight against hunger and as a proven strategy to promote economic stability throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Steve Barthel
Director of Government Relations
Minnesota Grocers Association



MINNESOTA BUDGET PROJECT

An initiative of
the Minnesota Council
of Nonprofits

February 24, 2026

Representative Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn
Centennial Office Building
5th Floor
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Nolan West
Centennial Office Building
2nd Floor
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Kotyza-Witthuhn and West and Members of the House Children and Families Committee:

The Minnesota Budget Project supports the creation of MN SNAP to protect those at risk of losing access to food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to the federal changes within H.R.1. Minnesotans cannot afford these drastic cuts to SNAP — our nation’s most effective tool to address food insecurity. For every one meal provided by the state’s existing hunger relief systems, SNAP provides nine.

Many Minnesotans struggle with affording an adequate diet. Roughly 440,000 Minnesotans currently receive food assistance from SNAP. In federal fiscal year 2024, more than half of SNAP recipients in Minnesota were in working families, more than 60 percent were in families with children, and nearly 40 percent were part of households with an older or disabled family member. Nearly two-thirds of SNAP participants have incomes below the federal poverty level, which for 2025 was just above \$32,000 a year for a family of four.

Because of provisions in the 2025 federal reconciliation law (H.R.1), by September 2034, more than \$187 billion in federal funding will be cut from this essential basic needs service nationally. Federal policymakers made changes that take away eligibility, reduce benefits, and [shift costs to states](#). Across the country, these cuts will come in the form of:

- A never-before-seen **“cost sharing” requirement** that means states must pay some of the cost of SNAP benefits, a change which could cost Minnesota more than \$86 million every year.
- An historic expansion of red tape through **work reporting requirements** that impact people ages 55 to 64, parents of teenagers, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and youth aging out of foster care.
- An across-the-board **reduction in the future value of SNAP benefits**.
- A dramatic **shift of administrative costs to states**, including the costs of implementing the above changes.

- Completely **eliminating SNAP-Ed**, a program that provided meaningful opportunities for community members regarding healthy eating, cooking, gardening, food budgeting, and more.
- Ending access to SNAP benefits for **lawfully present immigrants with humanitarian statuses**, including refugees, asylees, victims of trafficking and domestic abuse, and more.

Based on 2025 average SNAP benefit levels, and looking only at the 9,000 humanitarian immigrants losing eligibility for federal SNAP, grocers, farmers, and other food retailers in our Minnesota communities could expect to lose roughly \$1.5 million in sales paid for by SNAP benefits each month. Because SNAP works as a multiplier that encourages additional economic activity beyond the direct value of SNAP benefits, losing federal SNAP benefits just for these folks could result in a loss of about \$2.2 million every month in economic activity across the state. And considering the potential loss of coverage for time-limited recipients newly subject to work reporting requirements, the economic impact will likely be even greater.

All Minnesotans should be able to get the support they need to thrive, regardless of who they are or where they live. Without SNAP, tens of thousands of Minnesotans will go hungry or have less food than they need to live a healthy, happy life. We ask that you take bold action so that these dramatic federal cutbacks do not result in increasing hunger in Minnesota.

Please support the creation of MN SNAP. If there is any additional information I can provide, please feel free to contact me at ceckstrom@mnbudgetproject.org or 651-757-3071.

Sincerely,



Carly Eckstrom
Deputy Director

The Minnesota Budget Project, an initiative of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, identifies and promotes public policies so that economic security is available to all Minnesotans, regardless of who they are or where they live.

February 25, 2026

Dear Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

The Partners in SNAP Defense coalition is writing to offer our strong endorsement of the MNSNAP bill, which supports those at risk of losing access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to the federal changes within HR1.

The passage of HR1 amounted to the largest cut to SNAP in the history of the program—an \$187 billion reduction of the program's budget, or about 20%, by 2034. In Minnesota, a total of approximately 27,600 individuals are newly considered time-limited recipients and will be held to new requirements around work reporting as follows:

- 5,900 adults with children age 14 or older
- 12,700 adults without dependents, including seniors ages 55-65
- 9,000 vulnerable groups that were formerly exempt including veterans, youth aging out of foster care and those experiencing homelessness.

These impacted individuals will be subject to harsh and ineffective new work reporting rules. Even for those able to secure adequate work hours, these requirements create significant hurdles as both participants and county government officials navigate complicated paperwork and processes. In addition, this legislation puts approximately 9,000 legally present immigrants at risk of losing their existing access to SNAP.

Minnesota cannot afford these drastic cuts to SNAP—our most effective tool to address food insecurity. SNAP provides nine meals for every one meal provided by the state's existing hunger relief systems.

We urge your support for MNSNAP, which honors Minnesota's long history of caring for our neighbors when times are tough. MNSNAP will ensure that some of our most vulnerable community members do not lose their access to critical food assistance at a time when food prices and food insecurity remain at an all-time high.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration,

ACBC Food Shelf

Advocates for Better Health

Appetite for Change

Center for Victims of Torture

Community Emergency Service

Fairview Health Services

Foundation for Essential Needs

ICA Food Shelf

Instacart

International Institute of Minnesota

Jewish Family and Children's Service of MN

MN Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Minnesota Budget Project

Minnesota Community Action Partnership

Minnesota Legal Services Advocacy Project

Minnesota Social Services Association

Second Harvest Heartland

The Food Group

The Open Door

Valley Outreach



ADVOCATES FOR
BETTER HEALTH

February 25, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

My name is Rachel Stoll. I am a Community Health Worker, Board President of Advocates for Better Health (ABH), and a mother raising my family in Greater Minnesota. ABH is an organization dedicated to fostering a healthy, equitable, and thriving state through community-driven public health initiatives. I am writing to express our strong support for the MNSNAP bill, which would protect Minnesotans at risk of losing access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to federal changes in HR1.

As a Community Health Worker, I help families navigate complex systems to meet their most basic needs. Food access is foundational to health; when families lose SNAP, they do not simply lose grocery dollars but face increased risk of chronic disease, worsened mental health, housing instability, and financial crisis.

Food insecurity is directly linked to higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, pregnancy complications, and developmental challenges in children. It also contributes to toxic chronic stress, which can have lifelong impacts on physical and mental health. For rural communities, communities of color, and low-wage workers, SNAP is a critical health equity intervention. Without support from the state, these policy changes will disproportionately impact communities already experiencing racial, geographic, and economic disparities in health.

Minnesota has a long and proud history of stepping up when federal policy falls short. The MNSNAP bill represents a commitment to ensuring that our neighbors do not fall through the cracks. By maintaining access to food assistance, this legislation protects children's growth and learning, supports older adults' independence, stabilizes working families, and reduces downstream healthcare costs. It is a smart investment in prevention and an imperative public health intervention.

I urge you to support MNSNAP and safeguard access to essential food assistance for Minnesotans at risk of losing federal SNAP benefits.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rachel Stoll'.

Rachel Stoll
Board President
Advocates for Better Health

Advocates for Better Health
2355 Fairview Avenue #139 Roseville, MN 55113 | 612-623-2885
www.abhmn.org

THE CHALLENGE OF RISING HUNGER IN MINNESOTA

Rising grocery prices and cuts to critical food programs have driven demand for food assistance to new highs, and Minnesota's food banks and food shelves are operating beyond capacity as a result. These community pillars need new and ongoing state funding to continue to serve their neighbors facing hunger throughout our state.

MINNESOTA FOOD SHELF PROGRAM

The Minnesota Food Shelf Program (MFSP) is a critical and longstanding lifeline for nearly 300 food shelves across the state, providing flexible funding that allows local organizations to respond to what their communities need most.

HF3624/SFXXXX would provide an additional \$5.4 million annually to eligible food shelves and Tribal Nations, bringing base MFSP funding to \$10 million per year. This investment would prevent a de facto funding cut following several years of one-time investments and help ensure food shelves can continue to meet record high levels of need.

REGIONAL FOOD BANK PROGRAM

A new Regional Food Bank Grant program would also help address the above challenges by creating a reliable funding source specifically for food purchasing and distribution, providing an infusion of much-needed food at no cost to food shelves across the state.

HF3586/SF3770 would allocate \$10 million annually to the five food banks serving Minnesota, along with participating Tribal Nations, using current federal distribution formulas as a guide. This formula disproportionately benefits food banks serving Greater Minnesota, where the demand for food is high, but resources are even harder to come by.



1 in 5 Minnesotans can't afford the food they need.

FOOD BANKS SERVING MINNESOTA



Rochester



East Grand Forks



Brooklyn Park



Duluth



New Hope



February 25, 2026

Dear Members of the Children and Families Committee:

As members of the Nourish MN Coalition, we are pleased to offer our collective support for HF3624 (Coulter), which would increase base funding for the Minnesota Food Shelf Program by \$5.4 million, and HF3586 (Gander), which would create a new Regional Food Bank Program to increase the amount of food available at no cost to food shelves throughout the state.

Minnesota's hunger-relief network is strong and resilient, but this is an emergency system that is not built to keep people fed long-term. According to 2025 survey data from Second Harvest Heartland, 1 in 5 families in our state cannot afford the food they need without assistance. This led to more than 9 million food shelf visits in 2025, breaking records for the fourth consecutive year, according to annual data collected by The Food Group.

Food banks and shelves simply cannot sustain this level of need. To feed as many Minnesotans as possible, it is vital that food banks can utilize their purchasing power to their full extent and food shelves have flexible funds to meet their individual community needs. Consistent, reliable funding will maximize efficiency and keep Minnesotans fed until they reach true economic stability.

The Nourish MN Coalition envisions a Minnesota where everyone has the resources they need to thrive, and where everyone's basic needs are met. This legislation would move us closer to that goal, and it would make a meaningful impact on the people we serve. For that reason, we urge the Committee's support.

Sincerely,

Nourish MN

About us: Nourish MN is a coalition of Minnesota nonprofits and community partners who engage in a cross-sector approach to uplift commonsense ideas that reduce poverty, end hunger, increase mobility, and make housing, healthcare, and childcare affordable and accessible for all Minnesotans.

Written Testimony

MN House Children & Families Committee

Chairs and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share what I see in my work as a home visitor.

The goal of home visiting is to strengthen families by providing education, support, and access to resources that many parents were never shown how to navigate. We work alongside families to improve child development outcomes, increase stability, and build healthier home environments. Nutrition is not separate from that work, it is foundational to it.

I sit at kitchen tables with parents who are doing everything they can to provide for their children. They attend appointments, follow nutrition guidance, and carefully stretch limited income. Yet, many still struggle to consistently access enough nutritious food.

While programs like SNAP and WIC are essential, navigating them is often complex. Applications, renewals, documentation requirements, language barriers, and limited internet access can delay or interrupt benefits. Many of the systems in place assume families have consistent internet access, stable housing, flexible work schedules, and the ability to take time off to resolve benefit issues. For many of the families I work with, that is not the case. Home visitors frequently act as the bridge, helping complete paperwork, clarify eligibility, and resolve gaps when benefits are reduced or paused.

Even when families qualify, benefits often do not last the full month due to rising food costs. Parents face difficult decisions between rent, utilities, transportation, and groceries. I have sat with parents who quietly skip meals so their children can eat.

Some families do not qualify for SNAP due to eligibility restrictions, while others earn just above the income threshold but are still barely making ends meet. These families often rely entirely on food shelves and prepared meal programs. While these community resources are critical, they are not designed to serve as a family's primary, long-term nutrition plan.

The impact on children is visible. Inconsistent access to nutritious food affects emotional regulation, attention, sleep, growth, and developmental progress. When nutrition is unstable, it directly undermines the goals we work toward in home visiting, healthy development, school readiness, and family stability.

Strengthening funding for regional food banks, food shelves, prepared meal programs, and SNAP outreach and education supports the outcomes we are working to build every day. Investing in nutrition access is an investment in children and stronger families across Minnesota.

Thank you for your commitment to Minnesota families.

Sincerely,

Marlibni Villanueva
Family Educator, Way to Grow