



Greater Twin Cities
United Way
gtcuw.org

March 12, 2024

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

We write in support of HF 4165 to increase base funding for the SNAP outreach program.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good, and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone. Together with our partners, we touched over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. As an organization that partners with over 100 nonprofits and coalitions across the Twin Cities region and state, we know that access to nutritious and satisfying food can improve outcomes for individuals and families.

As the largest hunger safety net program in the U.S., the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides access to food for nearly 476,000 Minnesota residents, or 8.3% of the state's population. SNAP plays a critical role in the fight against food insecurity by ensuring that individuals and families with low incomes can address immediate hunger needs. The importance of the program increases exponentially for people experiencing homelessness. For them, access to food isn't just about nutrition; it is about survival.

SNAP serves as a lifeline to people experiencing homelessness, offering a means to obtain nourishment in the most challenging circumstances. Additionally, SNAP empowers individuals and families facing homelessness to purchase ready-to-eat food items or meals from local vendors, shelters, or food assistance programs. This access to food not only addresses immediate hunger, but also fosters a sense of dignity and autonomy, allowing them to make choices about the food they consume.

Greater Twin Cities United Way supports HF 4165 to increase base funding for the SNAP outreach program because we know that reliable access to food is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of stability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephanie L. Lewis".

Stephanie L. Lewis
Interim Director, Advocacy & External Engagement
Associate Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon Smith Jones".

Shannon Smith Jones
Senior Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way

• HELP US •

MAKE HUNGER HISTORY

WHO WE ARE

At Second Harvest Heartland, we work to end hunger together. As one of the largest, most efficient, and most innovative hunger-relief organizations in the nation, we leverage our unique position in the emergency food chain to make an impact. Through partnerships, we support those in our region facing hunger today.

We serve as a wholesale distributor for our region's emergency food system, sourcing food from local growers and farmers, manufacturers, grocery stores and restaurants. We then deliver this food to over 1,500 program partners across 59 counties in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin, providing 78% of the food distributed by the hunger-relief programs we work with.

In fiscal year 2023, we provided the equivalent of nearly 128 million meals while demand for food assistance hit a new all-time high.

In addition to working to reduce hunger today, we are working to prevent hunger tomorrow through public policy advocacy and innovative programs like FoodRx and our newly-expanded Care Center.

OUR IMPACT

128 million meals provided

In fiscal year 2023, we provided nearly 128 million meals to the community while demand for food assistance hit an all-time high with an estimated 7.5 million food shelf visits.

141 million pounds of food distributed

We sourced 11.8 million pounds of produce from local farmers, along with 6.3 million pounds of dairy, including 673,000 gallons of milk, and 3.2 million pounds of meat and eggs from Minnesota producers.

1.2 million+ prepared meals

In 2023, Kitchen Coalition, our prepared-meals initiative, delivered 1,212,165 fully-prepared meals to Minnesotans without the home, health or ability to cook for themselves.

8,000+ households assisted with SNAP

Our new Care Center, launched in Fall 2023, is a hub for food support resources, offering live support for neighbors seeking food today and helping with enrollment in other relevant programs, including SNAP.

\$195,800 distributed to the community

We provided over \$195,800 in grants to 24 education and nonprofit partners to help meet increased need and address food access challenges due to rising grocery prices, inflation and other issues facing Minnesota families.

HUNGER-FIGHTING POLICY PRIORITIES

Hunger is a policy choice, and cannot be eliminated through food distributions alone. That's why Second Harvest Heartland works with partners across Minnesota's emergency food system and others to advocate for hunger-fighting programs and policies that address its root causes.



STATE POLICY

Establish a Minnesota Food Bank Program to help the state's six food banks source and distribute more food to their hunger relief partners across the state.

HF 4150/SF4185 (Hemmingsen-Jaeger/Gustafson)

Increase resources for SNAP outreach to eligible recipients so that more Minnesotans have access to this critical hunger-fighting program.

HF 4165/SF4304 (Pérez-Vega/Kupec)

Expand college student access to SNAP so that individuals receiving financial assistance are still able to access the nourishment they need.

HF 4517/SF4402 (Keeler/Putnam)

Increase the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors to \$50/month, up from \$23/month, in order to reduce hunger rates and increase SNAP participation rates.* (Led by Hunger Solutions MN) HF 4108/SF4146 (Keeler/Mann)

Request a Medicaid 1115 demonstration waiver that would allow federal Medicaid funds to be used to support nutrition and housing programs, among other basic needs.* HF 3639/SF3969 (Noor/Mann)

*Also included in the Nourish MN Coalition Agenda.



Second Harvest Heartland is a member of the Nourish MN Coalition and is working alongside the other members to advance the following policy proposals to address root causes of poverty —and hunger— in Minnesota:

- **Help families afford high quality childcare** through income-based subsidies on a sliding scale.
- **Increase the housing supply** by updating restrictive zoning laws to allow for more housing of every kind and level of affordability.
- **Strengthen renters' rights** by prohibiting discrimination against renters and homebuyers based on the source of their income.
- **Expand free fare pilots** for public transit with a focus on food deserts and other communities with high food insecurity rates.



For more information, contact

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