

Vote to End Hunger Candidate Survey

Jackie Fielder



Running For:
State Senate District 11

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The crises of 2020 have reset our understanding of what's possible. Serious challenges demand bold solutions. We have the resources to do better. Now we need the courage to do better."



COVID-19 has caused a rapid and historic spike in food insecurity, especially among communities of color. If elected, what will you do to increase economic opportunity and food access for our hardest-hit communities?

I received free lunch when I was growing up and attending California public schools. Both the Native American side and Mexican side of my family experience high levels of diabetes. Adequate nutrition access improves physical and mental health outcomes, increases academic achievement, ensures healthy child development, and ultimately saves money in the long term for both the individual and the state.

As an educator in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, I've seen my own students struggle with food insecurity both prior to and as a result of the COVID public health and economic crisis. My State Senate campaign has also organized hand sanitizer distribution and coordinated the designation and stocking of sanitizer refill centers at food pantries, including several SF-Marin Food Bank programs in Visitacion Valley, and engaged with long lines of food insecure individuals and families while distributing sanitizer.

Many of the highest need individuals and families are monolingual, and many lack California IDs and driver's licenses as a result of immigration status, low income, and/or housing insecurity. Seniors and people with disabilities may also struggle to access available nutrition programs due to mobility limitations, and low-income working people may not always be available during scheduled pantry hours.

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My broader platform on COVID-19 recovery and relief for everyday Californians is available at <https://jackieforsenate.com/issues/covid19>

Longterm, I am committed to increasing California minimum wage to \$20/hour, comprehensive worker and labor rights to ensure economic opportunity and worker safety, deep investments in the acquisition and development of affordable housing to alleviate the burden of housing costs, and protecting and expanding education funding in order to close opportunity and equity gaps and provide quality meals -- including breakfast, snacks, and supper during extended hours or after-school programs.

The wealthiest individuals and most profitable corporations in our state have experienced an eye-popping consolidation of wealth, while everyday people are pummeled by unemployment, COVID infection, technology gaps in distance-learning, and an oncoming tsunami of evictions and foreclosures. Instead of balancing the budget on the backs of those hit hardest, we need to ensure that those with the greatest means pay their fair share. I will fight to increase income and wealth taxes for millionaires, billionaires, and the largest corporations and am actively campaigning to pass Schools and Communities First alongside the California Teachers Association, United Educators of San Francisco, the California Faculty Association, and AFT 2121.

San Francisco ranks 46th of 58 counties in enrolling eligible people in the CalFresh program. If elected, what actions will you take to improve CalFresh program access and utilization?

CalFresh is an incredible program and generates significant economic activity, but only small proportion of qualifying people access CalFresh. I am committed to promoting streamlining to increase access and enrollment, funding multilingual field outreach teams, coordinating with community-based organizations, and hiring more social workers for schools to support families with accessing available programs. With so many facing tremendous burdens in the cost of housing and healthcare, I'm committed to further expansions to eligibility. Enabling SSI recipients to enroll and increased access for students are solid first steps, and as State Senator I plan to partner with district Human Services Agencies as well as nutrition services providers to develop further expansions to eligibility.

The Restaurant Meals Program (Hot Meals), for instance, is currently available in only a handful of California counties, and eligibility is limited to unhoused people, seniors, and people with disabilities. Most enrolled restaurants are fast food chains. I support expanding access across the state, extending eligibility to low-income families with children, and promoting expanded enrollment among independent local businesses serving high quality nutritious food. Similar to the matching program for EBT at Farmers Markets, a matching program for local independent restaurants could also help revive our struggling food service sector.

Food insecurity is a major contributor to poor health and higher healthcare costs. What steps or legislative actions would you take to ensure that food insecure people with diet-related diseases have access to nutritious food?

Several communities in my district suffer from food deserts, and incidence of diet-related illness map with both poverty rates and food deserts. One pillar of my Green New Deal platform calls for expanded community gardens and land trusts to combat food deserts. I further support publicly operated grocery stores, community-owned food co-ops, and mobile food markets to provide low-cost nutritious groceries in food-insecure regions, in addition to expansions and increased access to CalFresh, WIC, and non-profit nutrition services.

In SF and Marin, 1 in 5 people experience food insecurity. What other steps or legislative actions would you take to address poverty and hunger in your community?

Our district is ground zero for income-inequality. Working people deserve a living wage, safe working conditions, and hazard pay. Unemployed people deserve economic relief, increased state benefits, reduced barriers to access, and multilingual outreach to increase enrollment.

Our public health departments regularly release detailed reports with actionable steps for resolving the crises of food insecurity, but time and again we fail to fully fund these solutions.

California is the fifth largest economy in the world, outstripping all but one European nation as well as Canada. For too long, the most profitable special interests in Sacramento have held the pen while legislation is written. I support more equitable and progressive tax codes and redirecting funding from bloated law enforcement and corrections budgets to reinvest in housing, education, healthcare, and nutrition security.

Some people will always say that major change is not realistic, but this year, we've proven those claims wrong. A year ago, we never could have imagined that one million people in our District could retreat indoors indefinitely, or shutter their businesses, or risk their lives to perform essential work -- all while educating their children at home and isolating from friends and family

The people in this District and this State have gone to incredible lengths, because we care about one another and want to keep each other safe. We proved our courage and our grit. So many of us have made tremendous sacrifices.

Now, we deserve leaders who have that same courage, who are willing to ensure that not just working people -- but the donor class and wealthiest interests in the state -- also contribute their fair share.

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