

Vote to End Hunger Candidate Survey

Vilaska Nguyen



Running For:
**San Francisco Supervisor,
District 7**

"In my work in the San Francisco Public Defender's Office, I see every day how systemic racism has denied the most basic needs to families and communities of color, including access to affordable, healthy food, and how such inequities have reverberating, generational effects for people of color."



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?

Food access is one of the most fundamental human needs. In my work in the San Francisco Public Defender's Office, I see every day how systemic racism has denied the most basic needs to families and communities of color, including access to affordable, healthy food, and how such inequities have reverberating, generational effects for people of color. We need immediate food distribution in food insecure communities.

I am inspired by SF Marin Food Bank's Pop Up Pantries to meet high demand in a safe way during COVID and the Pantry at Home delivery program for seniors. Other organizations like the Latino Task Force are providing food at the Mission Food Hub for everyone, but with a particular focus on making sure the Latinx community is getting good healthy food. I also applaud Supervisor Walton's efforts to increase access to food in historically black neighborhoods in the Bayview, in partnership with the Human Rights Commission and organizations like the Bayview Opera House and Bayview Senior Center.

As Supervisor, I would follow the example set by organizations like yours by working with District 7's community organizations, your organization, and other city and regional efforts to get healthy food, including produce and protein, into the hands of communities of color and those who need it most. I would also work on legislation, as needed, and funding to create more opportunities for food access in our communities who have been hit hardest by COVID.

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 essential program that more people in San Francisco need to make use of. I am glad that, in response to a surge of applications during COVID, the state was able to reduce some of the barriers to applying for assistance. But such statewide changes don't happen without constant advocacy, lobbying, and pressure from organizations like the SF Marin Food Bank.

If elected, I will be a strong supporter and fellow advocate alongside the SF Marin Food Bank and partner organizations to push for systemic changes that make CalFresh more accessible to all San Franciscans. I will also fight for efforts like the CalFresh Application Assistance program at the SF Marin Food bank that help lower barriers by directly guiding people through the application process.

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?

I believe that our City budget is a reflection of our values. As Supervisor, I will use my authority in the budget process to push for funding for programs that increase access to nutritious food for food insecure people. I will work with food banks to assess the needs of District 7 and help find sites for pop up food distribution programs in the areas that need it most.

I will also hold our City's Human Services Agency, Department of Public Health, and other agencies accountable to the needs of my constituents and to ensuring that food programs are free and easy to access. If legislative fixes are needed to get nutritious food to our most vulnerable, I will craft such legislation directly with the folks on the front lines providing that food and the communities who receive it.

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?

For the last 15 years, I've worked as trial attorney for the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. I've seen the ways in which environmental racism has impacted communities of color. Throughout my career, I've worked closely with low-income and communities of color to combat the underlying causes of environmental racism, especially access to affordable and nutritious food. I've seen how devastating the impacts of food insecurity can be on individuals and families, and I know how communities of color are disproportionately more likely to experience hunger and food deserts. Access to food has become even more important during and post-COVID as more and more people experience job loss.

As Supervisor, I will write and support legislation that dismantles white supremacy in our City, demilitarizes SFPD, and uses our extreme wealth to invest in education, workforce development, housing, food access, and environmental justice for our most vulnerable communities. I know intimately through my work that we can never stop the cycle of poverty if we don't address the underlying, structural inequities of our society, and that will be my focus as Supervisor.