

Vote to End Hunger Candidate Survey

Matt Dorsey



Running For:
Supervisor District 6

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What do you think are the root causes of hunger and what do you see as government's role in addressing them?

Income inequality is one of our nation's greatest drivers of food insecurity. As the wealth gap increases, more and more Americans experience poverty and the inability to know where their next meal is coming from. Additionally, many people find themselves living in food deserts, like the Tenderloin or areas of the Bayview-Hunters Point, where there is limited access to affordable, healthy food. COVID-19 has only made this problem worse with a lack of public transportation, supply chain challenges, and limited business operations. The most important role of the local, state, and federal government is to ensure that people's basic needs are met. The City's affordability crisis impacts us all in many ways, but thrusts longstanding San Francisco families out of the City or in the streets.

Governments and municipalities like CCSF need to aggressively address food insecurity and affordability. While we have EBT programs, Healthy Retail, and other services for our vulnerable populations, I have continually heard from CBOs, residents, and small businesses that we can play a larger, more effective role uplifting those in need.

That's why in my first month as Supervisor, I secured funds to hardworking grassroots groups like the Bayview Hunters Point Advocates, who launched a pilot program with HSA to source locally grown healthy produce from BIPOC-owned businesses to corner stores and markets in District 6, 5, and 10 where access is limited. I also fought to fund the Food Security Coalition- a group of CBOs that help so many families during the pandemic, but then was stripped from federal funding this year.

I am committed to ensuring that critical groups like SF Marin Food Bank have the public funding they need to maintain and expand their work, while exploring more policies and programs that uplift all our vulnerable populations.

The Food Bank believes that access to nourishing food will ensure our communities thrive. If elected, what policies will you pursue to improve food access, especially within communities of color and those with the highest rates of food insecurity?

I will continue to support budget advocacy for food security groups in the City that do amazing work alongside, and often times better than, the City. That will always be a top priority for me.

I am committed to working with DPH, HSA, and other City departments to see how we expand successful existing programs, and implement new ones. For example, we have so many corner stores and neighborhood markets that struggle to buy and sell healthy produce. We should subsidize the costs of healthy produce to ensure that many small businesses carry them across the City's food deserts. If they don't sell at low costs, then we donate. I also want to explore how big businesses and grocery chains better work with the City and network of CBOs to get food in the hands of those who need it, rather than go to waste. There is so much more we can do, in schools, government, and community to equitably address food security and I look forward to working with Food Bank to meet those objectives.

SF and Marin remain in the bottom third of counties in enrolling eligible people in the CalFresh program. If elected, what actions will you take to improve CalFresh program access and utilization?

My understanding is that this program resides under State control. My Office will reach out to the Offices of Senator Wiener and Assemblymember Haney to conduct an assessment of the seemingly low-rate of eligible individuals in the CalFresh Program. Before we can improve enrollment, we must understand the underlying problem. For instance, does SF and Marin's CalFresh Program readily provide in-person assistance to enrollment for older demographics rather than younger generations who are more likely to use online services? This is an issue I am keen on exploring with the Food Bank and creating solutions with our State representatives, or areas where the City can make up for gaps in the program.

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?

1. Expand grants to food security CBOs, like Food Bank and Bayview-Hunters Point Advocates.
2. Create new programs to distribute low-cost or free healthy produce items in small businesses in the City's food deserts.
3. Sponsor City vouchers for immigrant and BIPOC communities to access halal and kosher meats, produce, and diverse food options at participating businesses citywide.
4. Actively address the City's affordability crisis with sensible housing policies and more to ensure that at-risk families can stay out of poverty.
5. Actively work with the Food Bank and Food Security Coalition to implement new legislation in this realm that can benefit our vulnerable populations.