

Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

Mark Farrell



Running for:
San Francisco Mayor

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

As the cost of living continues to skyrocket, putting thousands of San Franciscans in danger of going hungry, it's become far too challenging for far too many families to live here. That's why City Hall has to get creative about solving hunger and affordability. As Mayor, I'll bring down the cost of living by providing universal childcare, finally creating the thousands of affordable homes San Francisco needs, and strengthening our small businesses to help workers thrive. My universal childcare plan will provide portable subsidies for low- and middle-income families, freeing up resources for other necessities like rent and groceries. My housing plan will jumpstart affordable housing production by helping more projects pencil and offering new housing assistance programs for public school teachers and first responders. And my small business plan will provide much needed tax relief to help uplift the backbone of our local economy. These measures will help eliminate hunger by addressing our affordability crisis head-on, so that San Francisco can finally be the best place in the world to raise a family.

If elected, how would you ensure coordination between the multiple government departments that fund and administer food assistance programs?

I am the only candidate in this race with high-level experience in our local government and the private sector, and that's why as Mayor I'll be uniquely effective in bringing bold and effective solutions to problems like this one. Currently, the City's approach to food assistance is made up of a patchwork of overlapping government programs, contractors and grantees, and outside philanthropic organizations—without any effective oversight or coordination. In real terms, that means that too many San Franciscans fall through the cracks and too much money that could actually help people is being wasted. That stops on my watch. In my first 100 days in office, I will audit all of the City's spending to ensure that we're only funding programs that deliver the results our neighbors expect and deserve. I'll also improve coordination among City departments and agencies by making clear that pointing fingers and passing the buck is not an acceptable approach to problem-solving, and it will not be tolerated any longer.

Studies have shown food can be medicine. If elected, how do you plan to use your position to improve food-related health disparities?

I'll always work with community members and public health experts to ensure that we are increasing access to healthy, nutritious foods, including by expanding farmers' markets and affordable grocery stores in every neighborhood. More broadly, reducing food-related health disparities starts with meeting people where they are. In addition to my plans to bring down the cost of living by investing in childcare, affordable housing, and small business relief, outlined above, my plan to confront the homelessness crisis shows my commitment to his approach. I will massively expand San Francisco's treatment capacity and create one centralized, 24/7 intake center where those suffering on our streets will be able to get the help they need at the moment they need it—including food, shelter, social work, and medical care—rather than being cut loose and expected to come back for an appointment days or weeks later. On the whole, we need to make it easier for those who need help to get it, and I will be guided by that principle as Mayor.

The San Francisco-Marín Food Bank will be closing all Food Bank-run Pop-Up Pantries by June 2025 due to cuts in government pandemic funding. This program currently serves 11,400 households, 75% of which are estimated to lose access to free weekly groceries when the funding ends. If elected, what would you do to ensure that all San Franciscans have access to nutritious foods?

I'm running for Mayor to make San Francisco the best place in the world to grow up. Sadly, one of the biggest challenges facing families right now is the ever-increasing cost of living. The pandemic showed us that programs like the Pop-Up Pantries not only work, but are essential to helping working people get by—and City Hall should be doing everything in its power to keep them alive. My comprehensive day-one audit will eliminate wasteful spending on programs that haven't delivered results to save taxpayer dollars and free up new resources for key priorities like ending hunger and lifting kids out of poverty. I'm proud to have supported our local food banks for years, both in elected office and as a volunteer, and I'll continue to do so as Mayor.