

Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

London Breed



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?

The root cause of hunger is poverty and government plays a crucial role in addressing the issue. But poverty is complex and requires approaches that are bigger than any one government or organization.

Hunger is often a symptom of a larger problem, but it's one that government is best equipped to address. Government plays a crucial role in combating hunger, utilizing key strategies such as social safety nets, economic development, nutrition education, and department & community coordination. By addressing these root causes mentioned above and implementing effective policies, governments can significantly reduce hunger and improve the quality of life for millions of people. My administration has been fighting hunger and supporting community organizations that work at the core of food coordination. This includes supporting food recovery groups, food transport services, and food generators each of which is working to feed those in need and care for our most vulnerable. In response to the pandemic, the Human Services Agency (HSA) established the City's COVID-19 food support program, now referred to as the Food Access Program. This program successfully reaches tens of thousands of families. While federal funding to support these programs has ended or declined, my budgets continue local investments in food pantries, grocery vouchers, and meals and markets, targeting community-based organizations that meet unique population needs. Additionally, HSA will also continue to combat food insecurity by continuing to connect people to other longer-term assistance such as CalFresh, WIC, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs and IHSS, coordinating with other departments on food security interventions.

As cited in the 2023 SF Biennial Food Security and Equity Report, twenty-nine City funded programs provide either resources to increase resident's ability to purchase food or food access services. A few examples of this work include leadership from the Department of Human Services Agency (HSA), the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), and the Department of Public Health. Through work and coordination between HSA and community advocates, CalFresh has wielded a year-over-year increase in funding, while simplifying the application process. HSA also established emergency food programs to provide immediate relief to those in need, this no more apparent than during COVID-19. While OEWD maintains and strengthens relationships with organizations and populations throughout San Francisco that face food insecurity and provide educational resources when needed to ensure that community food systems and food security initiatives are incorporated into all and any economic development.

CalFresh benefits are an important component of the city's strategy to address hunger in San Francisco. Because CalFresh benefits are 100% federally funded, we need to do all we can to ensure that EVERYONE who is eligible for this financial support can access the benefits. Through our various efforts, including outreaching to historically underserved communities, we have significantly increased our CalFresh caseload. Additionally, my annual budgets have consistently included resources for food security programing, nutrition education and outreach, and direct funding for food programs.

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

Effective coordination between government departments is crucial to ensure the efficient and equitable delivery of food assistance programs. This includes data management, interagency task forces, streamlining application processes, simplifying the eligibility criteria to enroll in programs, while improving outreach efforts among all departments.

The Human Services Agency (HSA) is charged with thinking about and addressing basic subsistence needs. Their programs are carefully tailored and targeted to reach those with great economic need. They also fund community-driven food support models like the D10 Community Market, partner with the Food As Medicine collaborative, fund CBOs to provide medically tailored meals - all in an effort to not only address economic disparities - our primary lens - but

also impact health disparities driven by poor nutrition. And while the Department of Public Health serves as the lead on addressing health disparities and prescribing nutritional approaches to improving nutrition-related health conditions, these two departments are in frequent communication on existing and future programs. It is essential that these two departments, along with OEWD, DAS, and others, are coordinating regularly to support our local food systems, investing in food education, collaborating with non-profits and community organizations, and allowing data to drive conversations.

By implementing these strategies, government departments can work together more effectively to ensure that food assistance programs are reaching those who need them most and are being served in a timely and efficient manner.

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

There is no doubting that access to food is critical to health and resilience, while decreasing the incidence of chronic diseases. This concept has been adopted by the City's departments that deal with food security, recognizing the importance of creating greater access to high-quality nourishment, promoting healthy eating habits, and addressing the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to San Francisco's deep affordability issues.

As I have done throughout my administration, if elected to another four year term, I will expand access to nutritious foods by expanding access to grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens, which I have done. An example of this work is the District 10 Community Market, which opened this year and has received national recognition. I will continue advocating for and supporting an expansion of SNAP benefits so that low-income individuals and families can afford healthy food, as well as promoting educational materials that inform San Franciscans about the benefits of nutritious foods and how to prepare healthy meals. And while we must come together to push for reforms at the state and federal level to address food labeling and stronger consumer protections, I will continue to address social and economic challenges locally by dealing with lowering the cost of housing, providing greater access to transit, and supporting community-based initiatives that provide and deliver nutritious foods for individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The San Francisco-Marin 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?

Since becoming Mayor, I am proud to have delivered a balanced budget that maintains essential services for the City, while building on my top priorities. This most recent budget, the City had to make tough decisions to close a sizable deficit. Despite these challenges, my budgets have included investments in public safety, public health, economic recovery and small businesses, children, youth, and families, as well prioritizing and supporting our marginalized communities.

In the most recent budget, I retained \$16.95 million in the SF Human Service Agency's (HSA) community food access budget. This includes \$3.1 million for nutritious meals provided by GLIDE Memorial Church, \$2.25 million for grocery vouchers so people can purchase nutritious foods directly from grocery stores, \$1.8 million for supplemental meals for populations that benefit from meals more than groceries, \$1.5 million for the Bayview Community Market, \$750,000 to support community food production, and \$5.2 million for community based grocery programs. These community based grocery programs provide culturally appropriate food in a neighborhood location that allow people to choose the food that they want, giving them the dignity of choice and minimizing the food waste that can happen when people are provided a bag of groceries that isn't of their choosing. These investments, coupled with the millions of dollars in existing funding across a number of City departments - including \$30.1 million in the Department of Disability and Aging Services to support San Francisco's seniors and disabled people in need of home delivered meals, congregate meal programs, and grocery support - will help ensure that food insecure people have access to nutritious food even though the Food Bank has to close your pop-ups.

My administration is focused on increasing the number of people who apply for and receive federally funded CalFresh benefits through innovative approaches. The Human Services Agency (HSA) has streamlined its processes to make applying easier and faster, including offering online and phone applications so people don't need to visit an office. HSA also conducts extensive outreach by partnering with community-based organizations in San Francisco and offers 'Benefits 101' webinars to help CBO staff better explain HSA benefits and processes to their clients. Recently, HSA received a federal grant to convert a van into a 'mobile CalFresh Office' that will enroll people at community events, food pantries, and other locations.

These initiatives have helped increase the number of households receiving CalFresh benefits by 90%, reaching over 114,700 people in nearly 80,000 households in San Francisco, an addition of 55,000 people in over 37,000 households. The average CalFresh benefit in San Francisco is over \$400, which means my administration's efforts have provided more than \$14.9 million in additional monthly food purchasing power for low-income households. Altogether, the total CalFresh food purchasing power in San Francisco now amounts to nearly \$32 million per month, or about \$383.5 million annually.

I am extremely proud of the work we have done in collaborating with our community partners to solicit input, develop programs, and implement solutions to directly support those facing food insecurity, and if elected, I will continue these efforts.