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First, thank you to Representative Scanlon for inviting me to participate in the Hunger in America: Local Solutions for a National Crisis roundtable. I really appreciate that Chairman McGovern, one of Congress's key advocates for solving our nation's food insecurity crisis, chose to visit the City of Philadelphia in recognition of the tireless work of our local food banks, volunteers, food pharmacies, and grocery workers.

Addressing hunger has always been a key priority for me and remains a critical issue as Philadelphians continue to struggle with the impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Across the city, 1 in 5 people experiences food insecurity. In other words, 20% of our residents do not have consistent access to enough fresh, healthy food to fuel an active life.

We must recognize how nutrition is tied up in wellbeing and affects health. Food is essential to the health of our neighborhoods.

As a state legislator, I launched the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which President Obama then implemented at the federal level.

HFFI is a public-private partnership provides access to affordable, healthy, and fresh food options. The program offers loan and grant financing to attract grocery stores and other fresh food retailers to underserved urban, suburban, and rural areas, and renovates and expands existing stores so they can provide the healthy foods that communities want and need.

I now lead annual federal appropriations requests to provide strong funding for HFFI programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and under the U.S. Treasury's CDFI Fund. These federal dollars improve access to healthy food in underserved areas, create and preserve quality jobs, and revitalize low-income communities and communities of color.

An anti-hunger agenda can include policies that aren't directly related to food. Beyond increasing SNAP benefits, maintaining certain program flexibilities, and increasing enrollment, I'm talking about increasing the federal minimum wage, and providing high-quality, affordable child care. A key part of this strategy must be guaranteeing safe, affordable housing because, to quote Matthew Desmond of Princeton University's Eviction Lab, "the rent eats first."

Fortunately, Philadelphia is home to some of the best food solutions and innovators in the country.

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, for example, runs a food pharmacy that provides families healthy food (both fresh and shelf-stable), connects them to community resources to meet long-term food needs, and provides support and education to help families eat healthy foods while staying mindful of budget restrictions.

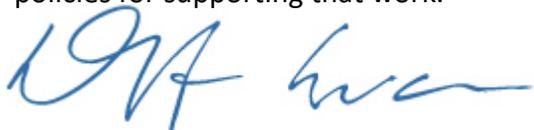
Another community-based organization, MANNA, brings together dietitians, chefs, drivers, and volunteers to deliver evidence-based nutrition services providing medically-tailored meals and nutrition counseling to people dealing with serious health issues including cancer and kidney disease.

I'm also very proud of our city's Reading Terminal Market, a place for local growers and producers to reach Philadelphians who are hungry for fresh, healthy produce grown in Pennsylvania and want to shop for it in a central location.

No one's zip code should determine their access to resources or their success in life. By working together to advance initiatives like these, we can continue to make sure that this isn't the case.

Expanding access to fresh, healthy food ensures a level playing field, and with that we can improve health and other wellbeing outcomes.

I thank our roundtable participants for sharing successful local strategies to address hunger throughout the Philadelphia region, and I look forward to exploring recommended federal policies for supporting that work.



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress