

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Statement for the Record

March 29, 2022

In July of 2021, I welcomed Chairman McGovern to Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District for an event entitled "Hunger in America: Local Solutions for a National Crisis." During that event, we sought to examine the impact of food insecurity in my region, explore the challenges that prevent too many people from accessing healthy food here, and highlight the effective strategies that individuals, community organizations, and local governments are deploying to address hunger in our community.

As is true in too many communities across the United States, many individuals in PA-05 face barriers to accessing the food they need for themselves and their families. And unfortunately, that's nothing new. In the years leading up to 2020, the data showed that about one in five Philadelphians and about sixteen percent of children in Delaware County were food insecure. In the Philadelphia metropolitan area, families were underwater with the costs of food, transportation, health care, housing, child care, and more, with food making up an average of about twelve percent of a family's household budget. Since 2020, these issues have only become more pronounced. After the COVID-19 pandemic began, local emergency food distributors reported a sixty percent increase in need. Long lines at food banks and stories of people needing to seek out food assistance for the first time shone a spotlight on an issue that has long been invisible, or ignored. It's clear that we need to take definitive action to solve America's hunger problem. Now.

Hunger does not exist in a vacuum. Efforts to end hunger require a thoughtful, collaborative, and comprehensive approach that considers all of the reasons why individuals face barriers to food access. Our federal food assistance programs, like SNAP, WIC, and school meals programs, are important tools in combating hunger, but we need to make sure that those programs can meet contemporary conditions and needs, in order to best serve Americans. We need to uplift solutions that meet people where they are and take into consideration the unique needs of different populations that they serve. We need to ensure that people and families have access to nutritious, good quality food that promotes overall health and development.

During our 2021 trip to PA-05, Chairman McGovern and I had the chance to visit with people and organizations in Philadelphia and Delaware Counties that are taking innovative steps to address the hunger issue. We talked to local government officials, researchers, health professionals, urban farmers, emergency food providers, students, and more. We toured a community farm in the heart of the city, a multicultural center's food bank, an organization working to bring medically tailored meals to those with chronic diseases, and the country's

oldest and largest indoor market, which is also one of Pennsylvania's largest, single-location redeemers of SNAP benefits.

Our trip made clear that in my district, incredible work is being undertaken every day to identify need, meet individuals where they are, and work toward the solutions that will keep our kids, seniors, veterans, and other community members from going hungry. It's also clear that these organizations cannot do this work on their own. The federal government needs to step up. When we talk about federal solutions, these are the local models that we should look to as examples of how to best serve our communities. As we move forward with the White House Conference on Nutrition, Food, Hunger, and Health, the testimony given by my constituents and organizations from the Philadelphia region will be an important piece of how we approach tackling some of these larger issues.

Over fifty years since its predecessor, it's time for another White House Conference on Nutrition, Food, Hunger, and Health. Hunger doesn't fit neatly into one jurisdiction or population, it's a multifaceted issue that affects individuals and communities across our society in unique ways, exacting a heavy - but unnecessary - toll in one of the richest nations on earth. If we're going to meaningfully address a problem that affects our children, students, veterans, military members, seniors, urban, suburban, and rural populations, and more, collaboration across the federal government will be required. I'm looking forward to bringing lived experiences and innovative strategies from my district to this conference, and achieving lasting solutions to our national hunger crisis.



Mary Gay Scanlon

Member of Congress