

Testimony to House Rules Committee
Bradley Tusk, Founder and CEO, Tusk Philanthropies
March 7, 2022

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Tusk Philanthropies is working to solve the hunger problem in our country.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to offer our testimony and for its sustained interest in this topic. We are particularly appreciative of the Chairman's work, whose leadership and commitment to anti-hunger efforts for decades is an example for many. Tusk Philanthropies stands in unwavering support of his efforts, including the encouragement of a White House Conference on Hunger.

We fundamentally believe that in this day and age, no one in our nation should ever go hungry. But unfortunately, that is far from reality. To address hunger issues in this country, Tusk brings a unique approach. We have found that mixing political skills and philanthropy to pass anti-hunger legislation can yield outsized results, and we work in states across the country to do just that. We also see opportunities at the federal level where Congress can take steps to help us solve problems faster, and I will tell you how.

For the past six years, Tusk Philanthropies has been listening to local hunger organizations, identifying ways to expand food security efforts in their states, and bringing strategic skills and resources to pass legislation that gets people the food they need. We are bipartisan in our approach. We work with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. As a team made up of people that have worked at every level of government, we have campaign skills, and we use them to help get people the nutrition they need — which has resulted in winning 15 campaigns at an 83% success rate. Our contribution to anti-hunger efforts is responsible for leveraging over \$1.5 billion to feed an additional 12 million people. This year, we are working in seven states, including in the Chairman's Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with a particular focus on the needs of children in K-12 schools and young people in our colleges and universities. All of us have an interest when young people are successful in school, enter the workforce, serve in the military, and build successful, independent lives in our communities.

As Members of this Committee know well, legislative success requires modern campaign resources, tools that most nonprofit hunger organizations are unlikely to possess or be able to buy. Wherever we work, Tusk not only provides grants to local hunger organizations, but we also equip our grantees with skilled public relations professionals, pollsters, and lobbyists to make our case to the legislature and the public. Our polling has shown, unequivocally, that feeding hungry people is popular all over the country. In fact, Americans believe that our government has an unwavering duty to help food-insecure people and get food from Point A to Point B.

While we continue to expand our work and have success at the state level, Congress has the power to scale the effort. For example, last year, the House passed a reconciliation bill that — had it passed the Senate — would have embraced nutritious school meals for all children, regardless of ability to pay, as an essential part of our educational infrastructure. It was smart, and we know that it works. Why? For the past two years, thanks to Congress, most kids have been automatically fed in school through pandemic measures, no questions asked. That meant no poverty tests, no chasing lunch money, and no shaming in the cafeteria. It is and continues to be very popular. Funding and rule changes to the Community Eligibility Provision would have continued this public good for years to come.

There's still an opportunity to make that happen, and we urge you to take advantage of that opportunity. We know there is bipartisan agreement that feeding kids is an essential part of alleviating the growing problem of child poverty and preventing crime. If you do your part at the federal level, we will do our part in the states to realize the full potential of federal support. We are prepared to run campaigns in all 50 states to make sure that every single state takes advantage of federal dollars to provide nutritious school meals for all, were it to become available to them.

School meals is just one area in which we work, and in addition to Massachusetts, we are also active this year in Kentucky, Nevada, Maryland, New Jersey, Vermont, and Washington, D.C. Tusk Philanthropies works to make the anti-hunger case at the federal level – and at the state level – to make sure hungry people get the food that they need. We know that feeding hungry people is not just the right thing to do, but that it builds a stronger nation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for providing an opportunity to testify, and Tusk Philanthropies looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to ensure that everyone in our great country has access to the food they need.