



**Joint Written Testimony of El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank and DoorDash
Before the Committee on Rules, U.S. House of Representatives
Ending Hunger in America: Food Insecurity in Rural America**

Dear Chairman McGovern, Ranking Member Cole, and Members of the House Rules Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the critical issue of ending hunger in America. Our testimony details the innovative partnership between El Pasoans Fighting Hunger and DoorDash that is powering home food delivery for those in need in the Texas borderland and the important role that local delivery can play in ensuring that no one in our country goes hungry.

El Pasoans Fighting Hunger (EPFH) is El Paso's only food bank and a member of Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief network. EPFH's mission is to combat the hunger crisis in our region by strategically procuring and distributing nutritious food through community partners. The food bank is the distribution center for over 132 partner pantries across the borderland region and collaborative hub for hunger initiatives that assists in SNAP applications and nutrition education. EPFH also distributes healthy and nutritious food to 543 client choice mobile pantries, which provide food to underserved/unserved communities.

EPFH currently serves an estimated 200,000 food insecure people. And, in 2020, the food bank distributed 139.7 million pounds of food -- which represents a 400% increase in food distributed from the previous year and makes EPFH the third-largest food bank in the nation in terms of distribution despite being the youngest food bank in the country.

DoorDash is a technology company that connects consumers with their favorite local and national businesses in more than 7,000 cities across the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan. Launched by DoorDash in 2018, Project DASH uses the DoorDash local delivery platform to tackle issues like food access and food waste. Project DASH enables government and nonprofit partners to request pickup and delivery fulfilled by Dashers -- the couriers who use the platform -- to food insecure families and other clients in the community. To date, Project DASH has fulfilled more than one million deliveries in over 900 localities across the U.S. and Canada, with approximately 85% of deliveries being made in communities of color. We estimate that these deliveries equate to more than 21 million individual meals for those in need.

Project DASH is DoorDash's signature social impact program. The company has dedicated a team of five full-time operators to manage and expand the program, who partner closely with cross-functional teams focused on external partnerships, product, delivery quality and communications. DoorDash is proud to have contributed more than \$4 million in in-kind deliveries through Project DASH to date.

Our Partnership to Serve Neighbors in Need Throughout the Borderland

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically increased the need for food assistance in the Texas borderland and across the country. In addition to the growing need, the unique challenges of the pandemic required El Pasoans Fighting Hunger and other food banks to find ways to safely get meals and other essentials to clients who are highly-vulnerable, ill, or in quarantine due to a COVID-19 exposure. The partnership between EPFH and Project DASH -- which began piloting deliveries in March 2021 as part of the food bank's home delivery program -- was the innovative solution that met these challenges.

Since launching, Dashers have fulfilled over 50,000 deliveries, providing approximately 750,000 meals to vulnerable community members, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. The partnership has served up to 2,100 food bank households during some weeks.

Our Vision: Local Delivery As A Tool To End Hunger

While the partnership between El Pasoans Fighting Hunger and Project DASH has allowed the food bank to respond to the immediate needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also demonstrated that local delivery is a transformational tool in the fight to end hunger. Delivery can address many of the barriers to access faced by vulnerable families -- including barriers that were present before the pandemic and will persist after the pandemic recedes -- while simultaneously enhancing client convenience and food bank operations.

Breaking Down Barriers to Access

In absence of local delivery, those in need are often required to travel to a food bank or food pantry to obtain food assistance. This means that lack of reliable transportation, a disability, or scheduling challenges created by work or childcare commitments can become insurmountable barriers to access for many families. Local delivery takes these barriers out of the equation by ensuring that food travels to families in need -- not the other way around.

As an example of the impact that this partnership has had for EPFH clients, we would like to tell you a little about Martina: Martina is in her late sixties and lives in a rural town located on the U.S.-Mexico border. When she reached out to EPFH, she shared that she had recently lost her husband, which significantly impacted her financially. She was also recovering from a set of knee surgeries. Martina didn't know how she would be able to get food because of the financial hardship she was experiencing coupled with her age and lack of mobility. She worried she might go hungry. Martina asked food bank staff if there was any service that could help her get food without requiring her to leave home. EPFH signed her up in the food bank's home delivery program powered by the partnership with Project DASH. She now receives food assistance in a way that accommodates her circumstance, including her limited mobility.

Even after the pandemic is over, the barriers that clients like Martina face will remain and, as a result, the need for local delivery services will continue.

Enhancing Client Convenience and Dignity

Local delivery facilitated by the partnership not only addresses barriers but also improves the client experience. Many Americans now order groceries or food for home delivery. A struggling family should not be precluded from having that convenience merely because of where the food is coming from -- in fact, families facing the challenges of economic hardship and hunger need the convenience more than anyone else. By better aligning the client experience with how other families receive their food, home delivery also reduces the likelihood that clients will endure the unfortunate stigma that many feel when accessing food assistance and other social programs.

Driving Efficiencies in Operations and Service

The partnership between EPFH and Project DASH has made facilitating home delivery to clients simple. Once EPFH identifies a client in need, the food bank can use DoorDash's existing local delivery network to easily schedule delivery of food to the client's home the same way that many restaurants or other merchants use the platform to connect with their customers. Deliveries are then fulfilled by DoorDash's community of Dashers, who are compensated for each delivery they make. Because of this partnership, there is no need for EPFH to have its own delivery vehicles or dedicate staff time to delivery services -- this drives operational efficiencies and allows EPFH to focus more resources on client assistance, food procurement, and other important services that advance its core mission.

A Policy Landscape to Support Local Delivery

Local delivery is an innovative solution to end hunger, but one that needs to be accompanied by the right public policies. We hope that any legislative or regulatory package following the work of this Committee or the proposed White House Conference on Hunger, Food, and Nutrition will acknowledge the power of local delivery and provide a policy landscape that empowers food banks to scale home delivery service to meet the needs in their community.

Ensuring That Our Nation's Food Banks Have Adequate Resources

Local delivery, like any other service, requires food banks and food pantries to be sufficiently resourced. Recognizing the sudden, heightened need during the pandemic, increased government aid was made available to ensure that food banks could continue to serve their clients. Food banks were able to expand their capacity through robust funding for services, hiring additional staff, and the surge in volunteerism. Now, EPFH and food banks across the country face substantial decreases in both funding and personnel. For EPFH, declining resources has meant evaluating whether to close as many as three of its five primary food pantries, end its homeless feeding program, and reduce its home delivery program by 50%.

In order to do their part in closing the meal gap and ending hunger, food banks need robust resources from the public and private sector. Increased aid during the pandemic demonstrated what was possible: standing up innovative models to reach vulnerable families -- like the partnership between EPFH and Project DASH -- and meeting unprecedented levels of need. Continued, increased funding will help food banks hire or retain essential staff, make infrastructure investments, conduct client outreach, and establish and enhance programs like local delivery that can ensure that every family has access to the food they need. Robust resources are particularly important in order to expand services to meet the food and nutrition needs of those in rural, hard-to-reach communities.

Further Assess the Power of Local Delivery Through Demonstration Pilots

Local delivery should be considered as Congress weighs authorizing and funding demonstration pilots to evaluate the potential of alternative approaches to food assistance. Doing so would provide opportunities for new food banks to initiate local delivery for their clients and for food banks to expand the scope of existing delivery programs to new populations or new communities. Demonstration pilots would also allow the federal government to better evaluate the positive impact of local delivery on food insecure families and how delivery could be implemented as part of a national anti-hunger strategy.

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We can end hunger in America, but it will require innovative solutions in order to ensure that food reaches those most in need. The partnership between El Pasoans Fighting Hunger and Project DASH to serve struggling families in the Texas borderland has demonstrated the power of local delivery in overcoming some of the steepest barriers to food access. As Congress and the Administration look for solutions to this critical issue, we encourage consideration of the role local delivery can play.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. El Pasoans Fighting Hunger and DoorDash stand ready to work with the Committee, find solutions, and push for action during this truly all-hands-on-deck moment to end hunger.