



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

## **Bread for the World Listening Session Report to White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health July 2022**

### **About Bread for the World**

[Bread for the World](#)'s mission is to help end hunger by in our lifetime. Bread acts in the belief that everyone must play a part in ending hunger, especially our federal government. Bread for the World works to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist. We work in partnership with congregations, charities, and community groups to mobilize Christians and others by congressional district and by state. Together, we seek policies and practices that will make life better for people facing hunger.

### **Listening Session**

For more than a year, Bread for the World has been persuading our partners to join our efforts to urge the administration to organize a White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. We welcomed the announcement that such a conference is now scheduled for September.

Bread for the World held a listening session on June 28, 2022, with local faith leaders to consider the questions posed by conference organizers on Pillars 1, 2, and 3. The listening session brought together 35 of Bread for the World's most active faith leaders, representing 23 states and the District of Columbia.

### **The Issues**

Participants in the listening session, working in four breakout sessions, developed the following recommendations. They are organized under the three pillars of the White House Conference that are Bread for the World's focus.

#### **Pillar 1: Improve food access and affordability**

*End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities — to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available.*

- The need to recognize the connections between access to food and access to transportation. For people who live far from a grocery store, not having dependable bus or other transportation creates a barrier to accessing nutritious food. The root causes of lack of access to transportation and potential solutions are part of the problem of

expanding access to food. One possible model for public/private partnerships is the ["Catch a Ride" pilot project](#) in Winnebago County, Wisconsin.

- Dignity for all participants in public programs is very important, and policies should include measures to ensure that programs respect people's dignity and autonomy. One example of a mobile app that enables people to locate information and services independently is Community Compass in Indianapolis, IN.
- Expand access to SNAP for groups of people who are currently not eligible but include people who are income-eligible and in need. Examples of these groups include college students who work fewer than 20 hours a week, people returning to the community who have specific felony convictions, and documented immigrants who arrived less than five years ago.
- Permanent policies are needed to provide meals in the summer for children who receive breakfast and lunch at school during the school year. One approach that has worked well for children whose families participate in SNAP is to increase household SNAP benefits in the summer to help families afford the extra groceries needed.
- Food waste is a direct cause of both hunger and unnecessary production of greenhouse gases. The country needs better strategies and support for reducing food waste and expanding food recovery efforts.

This is an area where public/private partnerships could make the efforts of everyone involved more effective. Private companies are already involved in processing waste, recycling, manufacturing processed foods, preparing food for customers in restaurants, and so forth. Many businesses, as well as institutions such as colleges, waste large amounts of food, but they could reduce this significantly if they were given information and incentives to do so.

- Hunger and health are connected, and hunger is a key underlying reason for higher healthcare costs. There has not been enough research, particularly recent research, on the costs of *not* reducing and then ending hunger. Research at the state level could quantify the costs of hunger and the benefits of reducing it.

## **Pillar 2: Integrate nutrition and health**

*Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutritional needs of all people.*

- To better integrate nutrition and health into people's lives, one approach is to focus or refocus on teaching young people basic life skills, specifically gardening and cooking.
- Health insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, should be required to cover nutrition services.
- Physicians and other primary care providers should be educated and encouraged to conduct nutritional assessments with patients.

### **Pillar 3: Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices**

*Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.*

- Participants suggested that USDA, as the largest funder of food banks and schools, should encourage a holistic approach by developing and expanding opportunities for strategic partnerships—for example, between organizations in the food and nutrition sector and those working in sectors such as housing, transportation, health care, childcare, and employment skills.
- Provide more support and incentives to grow fruits, vegetables, and other “specialty crops,” and expand access to fresh produce. One strategy, now being implemented in some parts of the country through the [Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentives Program](#) (GusNIP), enables more low- and moderate-income households to participate in community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
- A related idea is providing schools with additional funds to improve the nutrition of the meals they serve. The effort could include exploring and supporting ways of pairing schools with local farmers to bring more fresh fruits and vegetables to school meals. This would both introduce children and families to healthier food options and support local farmers.
- One negative policy is when nutrition programs have “benefits cliffs,” where families will suddenly lose access to all benefits if their income increases by even a dollar over the income threshold for that program. It means families can be worse off if a parent accepts a promotion – they will earn more money, but often not enough more to offset the loss of SNAP or other nutrition benefits.
- The country saw that expanding the Child Tax Credit for several months in 2021 quickly and dramatically reduced the rate of poverty and hunger among children. There is evidence that families spent almost all of the extra benefits on food and basic household necessities. Restoring this expansion and making it permanent would make it possible for parents to give children more nutritious meals.
- When Congress reauthorizes the farm bill, it should include more emphasis on the great importance of nutrition to people’s lives and health. It should also include measures to recognize the cost of nutritious meals and develop additional ways of helping people afford these diets.