

Fair Food for All DC Coalition FY2024 Budget and Advocacy Priorities

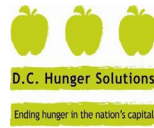
The District of Columbia’s battle with persistently high rates of food insecurity is not yet won. DC is home to the nation’s highest rate of senior hunger and has one of America’s highest rates of childhood food insecurity. After the pandemic increased the number of DC residents relying on SNAP by 49%, skyrocketing inflation has further burdened households already struggling to afford enough food. Continued food insecurity contributes to diet-related illnesses like diabetes and hypertension, which disproportionately harm our Black and brown residents and widen unacceptable disparities in life expectancy along racial lines.

Fortunately, DC is also home to some of the country’s most innovative public-private partnerships tackling food insecurity. The collective efforts of the Fair Food for All DC Coalition, alongside the DC Council, the Executive Branch, and agency partners like DC Health, connect tens of thousands of DC residents with the nutritious, dignified food they need each year. In the face of dramatic inflationary pressures and expanded local needs, **our complementary food access solutions are producing measurable results, targeting root causes, and protecting our community from potential disruptions at the Federal level.**

Given our shared commitment to fighting food insecurity and health disparities, we respectfully ask our partners in District government to fully support the following measures in the FY24 budget:

Invest in innovative food access models leveraging farmers’ markets, urban farms, healthcare providers, and corner stores:

- **Maintain \$750,000 for the Healthy Corner Store Partnership program.** With 53 stores and 15,000 food insecure customers city-wide, this DC Central Kitchen-led initiative is transforming small businesses into robust, reliable access points for healthy foods. One-third of these DC Health funds will directly support SNAP Match incentives, putting vital resources in the hands of SNAP customers selecting fruits and vegetables at nearby corner stores.
- **Maintain \$500,000 for Produce Rx.** Led by DC Greens with funding from DC Healthcare Finance, this nationally acclaimed program is expanding to serve 1,319 DC adults and 898 children annually. Last year, more than half of Produce Rx’s budget was reinvested into our local food economy through physician-prescribed purchases of fruits and vegetables.
- **Maintain \$500,000 for the Well at Oxon Run.** Rooted on DPR-owned land and operated by DC Greens, The Well's food access, health, and cultural programming fills a vital need in Ward 8. Continued funding is critical to DC Green’s ability to keep the farm in good repair, grow its food access and healthcare programming, and inclusively meet community needs.
- **Add \$496,000 for the Produce Plus program, from \$1,500,000 annually to \$1,960,000.** These funds will empower FRESHFARM to address the significant unmet demand for this acclaimed farmers’ market nutrition program by increasing the number of DC residents it serves by 30% to a total of 8,000 people. This increase will address the critical needs of 4,500 seniors among other food insecure residents of Wards 5, 7 and 8, building last year’s District investment in the successful implementation of a new digital program design that added dignity, choice, and autonomy to the customer experience.



Bring healthy food where it is needed most through creative community partnerships:

- **Maintain \$1,825,000 for the Joyful Food Markets program.** Led by Martha's Table in partnership with Capital Area Food Bank, this program will reach 8,500 children and their families in Wards 7 and 8 this year. These healthy grocery markets at 56 school partner sites create low-barrier, no-cost food access points that make healthy eating fun, easy, and educational.
- **Add \$310,000 for home-delivered Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) and Medical Nutrition Therapy for individuals with serious illnesses, an increase from \$1,025,000 annually to \$1,335,000.** With support from DC Health's Community Health Administration, this program immediately addresses inequities in food security and healthcare access. Over 44% of Food & Friends' meals for DC residents living with cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and other serious illnesses are provided in Wards 7 and 8, and 16% of surveyed clients indicate this program is their only food source. Participation in a MTM program is associated with fewer hospital and nursing home admissions and lower overall medical spending.
- **Add \$50,000 for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, an increase from \$410,000 to \$460,000.** Operated by Capital Area Food Bank with funding from DC Health, this vital program for food insecure seniors provides 1.6 million meals annually. This increase will support 10,000 individually delivered meals for seniors who are unable to pick up meals, or who are on the waitlist to access CSFP.
- **Add \$750,000 for Capital Area Food Bank's food distribution efforts in the DC Health budget.** These funds will provide culturally familiar produce boxes and linkages to preventative care to 75,000 food insecure seniors, families with children, and individuals living with chronic disease in Wards 5, 7, and 8.

Support evidence-based legislation and proven system-wide solutions that will address long-standing disparities in our food system:

- **Fully fund the local costs of No Senior Hungry.** The District took decisive action to address the nation's highest rate of senior hunger by passing this legislation aimed at improving agency coordination, enhancing communication with seniors, and more effectively leveraging Federal resources. The bill will cost \$1.58 million in year one and a total of \$26.1 million over the next four years.
- **Advance the implementation of the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP).** This values-based procurement program was incorporated in both the Healthy Students Amendment Act and the most recent DC Public Schools foodservice RFP, but funding is needed to support the continued implementation, assessment, and broad-based adoption of GFPP. This effort will cost \$677,000 annually, including a new FTE at DCPS.
- **Fully Fund Give SNAP a Raise.** Passed by the Council last year, this bill increases minimum monthly SNAP benefits, aligns funding to reflect updated household nutrition standards, and adds a locally funded SNAP benefit. The bill will cost \$51.9 million in year one.
- **Pass and Fully Fund the Universal School Meals Amendment Act of 2023.** This Act would ensure District students participating in the National School Lunch Program would receive lunch at no cost. The bill aims to reduce barriers to participation for families who are uncomfortable with disclosing personal information, burdened by reduced-price meals, or struggling on the edge of Federal eligibility standards. The bill will cost \$8 million in year one.