



March 31, 2023

Minnesota Senate  
Health and Human Services Committee  
Room 2107, Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

On behalf of the team at Second Harvest Heartland, our region's largest food bank, I am writing to thank you for including vital funding to support Minnesotans facing hunger in the Health and Human Services omnibus budget.

Increasing base funding for the Minnesota Food Shelf Program, providing one-time support for infrastructure investments at hunger-relief organizations, and supporting Tribal food security will all go a long way to realizing Second Harvest Heartland's mission of ending hunger together. We are particularly grateful your bill includes funding to launch a prepared meals grant program, which, while not at the funding amount we had initially requested, still represents a strong first step toward supporting this work in the long term in Minnesota.

As you all likely know, hunger in Minnesota remains at a record high due to the ongoing consequences of the pandemic, elevated grocery costs, and sunseting federal benefits. Visits at food shelves topped 5.5 million last year, more than 2 million more visits than in 2021. However, our research shows that 15% of those who are food insecure don't have the home, health, or ability to cook for themselves, meaning that a food shelf is not the best source of food assistance. Even with existing state and federal meal programs, too many Minnesotans aren't getting the support they need.

A prepared meals grant program, targeted to those who aren't eligible for existing meal programs, will help ensure the continued growth of this work in Minnesota, building on the successful distribution of American Rescue Plan funds to support the distribution of prepared meals over the last year, reaching communities in all corners of the state. We look forward to working with this committee in the future to find more funding for this grant as we face record rates of hunger in Minnesota.

Thank you for your support and for the investments you've made in addressing food insecurity in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison O'Toole".

Allison O'Toole  
Chief Executive Officer  
Second Harvest Heartland

2HARVEST.ORG

651-484-5117 | 888-339-3663

7101 WINNETKA AVE. N., BROOKLYN PARK, MN 55428

