



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

Minding the Grocery Gap in the District of Columbia

A 2024 Update

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Acknowledgments

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About D.C. Hunger Solutions

D.C. Hunger Solutions, established in 2002 as an initiative of the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), is dedicated to eradicating hunger and poverty and enhancing nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being for low-income residents of Washington, D.C. The organization employs a three-pronged strategy: improving access through public policies related to hunger and nutrition, maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs, and educating the public about hunger and its root causes. By collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, government agencies, community organizations, businesses, and advocates, D.C. Hunger Solutions effectively reduces hunger, supports economic security, and improves health outcomes in the District.

Executive Summary

In the District of Columbia, nearly 9 percent of households struggle to afford enough food.¹ Additionally, Washington, D.C., continues to experience one of the highest percentages of older adults experiencing hunger in the nation, with one in three adults age 60 years and over identified as food insecure, according to data collected by Capital Area Food Bank.² The ability to obtain enough food for an active, healthy life is one of the most basic of human needs. Without access to adequate, healthy food, people are likely to experience hunger, to be undernourished, and have poor health outcomes such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other nutrition-related health problems.

Food insecurity in the District of Columbia is deeply rooted in systemic poverty and the persistent inequities in the distribution of wealth, resources, and access to essential needs, including nutritious food. The uneven allocation of resources leaves many communities with low incomes who are marginalized disproportionately affected, struggling to afford or access healthy food options. While affluent areas benefit from a wide array of grocery stores, markets, and fresh food retailers, underserved neighborhoods often face the compounded challenges of food apartheid and lack of affordable options.

Policymakers, advocates, and community leaders have long recognized the urgent need to address these disparities. Through coordinated efforts, they have developed targeted programs aimed at alleviating food insecurity by focusing on the most vulnerable populations. Initiatives such as increasing funding for local food assistance programs, incentivizing grocery stores to open in low-access areas, and supporting community-driven urban farming projects are part of this larger strategy. Additionally, advocates are pushing for systemic changes, encouraging investments that not only meet immediate needs but also promote long-term economic opportunities, food sovereignty, and social equity in these communities.

This multifaceted approach underscores the commitment to fostering a more just and equitable food system, where every resident — regardless of income, race, or neighborhood — has access to the nutritious food they deserve. However, achieving true equity in food access requires sustained collaboration, policy innovation, and continuous investment in the communities most impacted by these long-standing inequalities.



In August 2023, D.C. Hunger Solutions released [***Still Minding the Grocery Gap in D.C.: A 2023 Update***](#) examining grocery store access and the resulting impacts of grocery store disparities in the District of Columbia. While previous years' reports highlighted the continued increase in the grocery store gap between the highest- and lowest-income neighborhoods, the 2023 update also reported on the policies announced to address the widening grocery gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic — specifically, allocated funds, directives, and proposed legislation implemented by D.C. Council. The 2023 report also revealed the number of grocery stores in the lowest-income areas, Wards 7 and 8, had not changed, and the stores in the grocery store pipelines for those wards had not been completed in 2020.

Lack of Grocery Stores, Food Access, and the Root Causes

■ Transportation

Over one-third of residents in the District rely on public transportation.³ Ward 8, Ward 7, and Ward 4, experience the highest number of residents who drive to work. These wards also exist along the edge of the D.C.-Maryland border. When analyzing the District's Metro system map, the lack of bus and subway train stations east of the Anacostia River becomes clear. Of the six Metro lines that run through D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, four Metro lines run east of the Anacostia River, with six stops east of the Anacostia River in D.C., one shared by the silver and blue lines; three stops in Ward 8; and two stops in Ward 7.⁴ In comparison, the red line does not touch east of the Anacostia River but includes 27 stops through D.C. and Maryland. In terms of the Metrobus, Ward 7 and Ward 8 make up 30 percent of all stops in D.C., with Ward 5 hosting the highest number of stops (525 total).⁵ Many residents in lower-income areas in the District have fewer public transportation options available to them, which has a profound impact on the hunger landscape in the District. The lack of transportation has many negative implications for both older adults and residents with disabilities. Furthermore, it limits many residents' access to grocery stores. Ridesharing apps may be the only option, but this becomes expensive over time, and some areas may not be accessible through these apps.

For Wards 7 and 8, a lack of Metro stops east of the Anacostia River has also contributed to higher commute times to work.⁶ Furthermore, the cost of using the Metro may contribute to residents being reluctant to use the service. Now, with the Metro base fare increase from \$2 to \$2.25, the maximum fare has increased to \$6.75. Metro continues to offer the Low-Income Fare Program called "Metro Lift" for SNAP recipients, which decreases fares by 50 percent.⁷

■ Economic Stability

Investing in communities in the District is important for maintaining economic stability. Unemployment, taxes, tax credits, and economic development initiatives are all important for cultivating D.C.'s economy. Many high-paying jobs require college degrees, while many residents struggle to receive quality education.

Employment and educational attainment also vary across the District. Ward 2 and Ward 3 have the lowest levels of unemployment in residents 16 years old and older and the highest concentration of college-degree holders ages 25 years old and older.⁸ Wards 7 and 8 have unemployment rates for persons 16 years old and older more than double that of the District average.⁹ Education, transportation, health, and more, all tie into a person's ability to maintain employment and afford the cost of living in the District.¹⁰

■ Food Affordability

Food affordability in Washington, D.C., is a multifaceted issue influenced by supply chain disruptions, inflation, and rising grocery prices. While about 9 percent of households in the District struggle to afford enough food, inflation has driven up the cost of groceries, making it harder for communities and older adults with low incomes to maintain a healthy diet. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics Consumer Price Index, the cost of food has increased in the mid-Atlantic region by 3 percent since September 2023.¹¹

■ Environment and Climate Change

Climate change significantly threatens food access in the District of Columbia by disrupting the local food system. Extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and storms, damage crops and interrupt supply chains, leading to food shortages and reduced availability of nutritious options, particularly for vulnerable communities. Climate change also worsens food insecurity by lowering crop yields and decreasing the nutrient content of essential staples like wheat and rice.¹² Additionally, food waste, a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, is exacerbated by climate-related disruptions, such as power outages that spoil perishable food. In response, the District is taking steps to build climate resilience by expanding urban agriculture, increasing local food production, and reducing food waste through composting initiatives. Efforts to improve food security also focus on closing the grocery gap in predominantly Black neighborhoods with low incomes and strengthening local food infrastructures to ensure access during climate-related disruptions.¹³

Methodology

This review conducted by D.C. Hunger Solutions looks at the number of full-service grocery stores across the District. For purposes of this report, full-service grocery stores are defined as business establishments with a minimum of 50 percent of the store’s total square footage, or 6,000 square feet, primarily engaged in retailing designated food products for home consumption and preparation.¹⁴ The data for this report was collected from various sources, including local government databases and economic reports. The focus was on the number

of full-service grocery stores in each ward and changes in median household income from October 2023 to September 2024.

D.C. Hunger Solutions also analyzed a number of indicators of food security, poverty, and health among D.C.’s residents, including median income, race and ethnicity, health outcomes, availability of transportation, and education. Data was gathered from publicly available sources indicated throughout the report and verified where possible.

Data Shifts Since 2023

Change in Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores and Poverty Rate in D.C. Overall and by Ward, 2023–2024

Ward	Population	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores (2023)	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores (2024)	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores in Pipeline (2023)	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores in Pipeline (2024)	Median Household Income (2023)	Median Household Income (2024)	Difference in Median Household Income by Ward	Percentage of Individuals Below the Poverty Line (2023)	Percentage of Individuals Below the Poverty Line (2024)
D.C.	679,947	74	74	3	3	\$104,110	\$98,916	(\$5,194)	12.05%	11.86%
1	83,773	13	12	0	0	\$126,433	\$120,010	(\$6,423)	11.90%	8.58%
2	82,156	13	13	0	0	\$124,728	\$116,285	(\$8,443)	5.88%	5.67%
3	76,884	14	15	2	1	\$157,057	\$147,968	(\$9,089)	2.04%	2.44%
4	82,875	11	11	0	0	\$106,634	\$109,966	\$3,332	6.78%	7.43%
5	90,211	6	8	1	2	\$102,744	\$98,326	(\$4,418)	7.65%	9.16%
6	108,473	10	9	0	0	\$125,555	\$120,943	(\$4,612)	7.89%	9.39%
7	74,720	4	3	0	0	\$49,509	\$49,814	\$305	23.26%	23.85%
8	73,442	3	3	0	0	\$47,421	\$45,598	(\$1,823)	26.61%	23.85%

- [DC Health Matters Demographics Data](#)
- [Washington, D.C., Grocery Market](#)
- [Grocery Store Locations](#)

Number of Grocery Stores

In 2024, the number of full-service grocery stores in Washington, D.C., remained unchanged from 2023, holding steady at 74 stores. The lack of change in the number of grocery stores in 2024 is due to a balance between store openings and closures across the District.¹⁵ Ward 1 reported a single closure, and a decrease in individuals below the poverty line from 11.90 percent to 11.70 percent¹⁶. Alongside these changes, the number

of full-service grocery stores available to Wards 7 and 8 residents east of the Anacostia River remains relatively static, with three total full-service grocery stores — two full-service grocery stores in Ward 7 east of the Anacostia, and residents in Ward 8 east of the Anacostia River are still limited to one grocery store, which has been the only full-service grocery store servicing the approximate 5.5 square mile area for 16 years.¹⁷

As noted in the D.C. Hunger Solutions [2024 Racial Equity Report](#), Wards 7 and 8 east of the Anacostia River, largely comprised of Black residents, experience extreme wealth, health, and educational disparities. Ward 3 continues to experience the highest number of grocery stores serving 76,884 residents. Ward 3 also has the highest median household income in Washington, D.C., and is followed closely in full-service grocery store numbers by Ward 2 with 13, Ward 1 with 12, Ward 4 with 11, and Ward 6 with nine. Of these wards, the lowest median household income is \$109,966 in Ward 4.

Grocery Store Chains in the District of Columbia

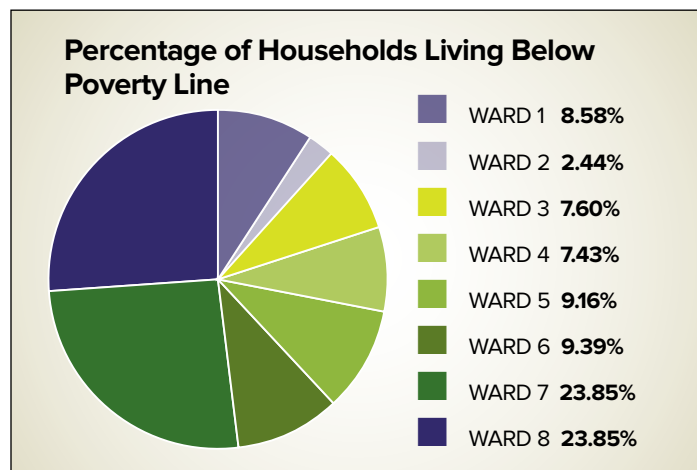
The top three grocery stores in the District with the most locations are Safeway (Albertsons) with 12, Whole Foods with eight, and Giant and Streets Market tied in third with seven.¹⁸ There are five grocery stores in the 2024 pipeline slotted to open in Wards 3, 5, and 6.¹⁹

Poverty Level and Food Insecurity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that in 2023, 86.5 percent of U.S. households were food secure, which suggests consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. However, 18 million households (approximately 13.5 percent) experienced food insecurity at some point during the year, indicating challenges in obtaining sufficient food due to a lack of financial resources. Of these, 8.4 percent were classified as having low food security, when households managed to avoid major disruptions in food intake by limiting dietary variety. Additionally, 5.1 percent of households experienced very low food security, meaning that eating patterns were disrupted, and food intake was reduced. Households with children had a higher rate of food insecurity at 17.9 percent, with 1 percent (about 374,000 households) experiencing severe levels when children skipped meals or did not eat for a whole day. Food insecurity disproportionately impacted single-parent households, households with low incomes, and Black and Hispanic households, with the highest rates seen in households living below the poverty line. Regionally, food insecurity was highest in the South and lowest in the Northeast. Over time, the prevalence of food insecurity in 2023 was significantly higher than the rates

observed between 2015 and 2022 but lower than the levels seen from 2010 through 2014, indicating a fluctuating trend. In total, 47.4 million people, including 13.8 million children, lived in food-insecure households, highlighting the ongoing need for targeted efforts to reduce food insecurity among vulnerable populations.²⁰

While poverty levels decreased in several wards across the District — bringing the overall percentage of individuals below the poverty line down from 12.05 percent in 2023 to 11.86 percent in 2024 — some areas experienced an increase. Wards 5 and 8 experienced particularly sharp changes in poverty, jumping from 7.65 percent to 9.16 percent and from 26.61 percent to 23.85 percent, respectively.²¹



Ongoing District Food Policies and Initiatives

Introducing and funding targeted legislation has been a critical step taken by D.C. government to address the persistent lack of grocery store access in low-income areas. These policy proposals not only seek to increase the number of grocery stores but also aim to alleviate the broader issue of food insecurity, which disproportionately affects underserved communities. By investing in infrastructure, offering incentives to grocers, and prioritizing these neighborhoods in urban planning, legislation serves as a powerful tool to combat the structural inequalities that contribute to limited access. This approach recognizes that sustainable, equitable food systems require more than short-term solutions — it necessitates comprehensive policies that support long-term community health and economic stability.

D.C. Hunger Solutions continues to be pleased with these serious actions and supportive of additional investments to help close the grocery gap.

■ **Food Access by Public Transit Study Amendment Act of 2023**

Introduced by Councilmember Christina Henderson, along with Councilmembers Charles Allen, Robert C. White, Jr., and Brooke Pinto, the [Food Access by Public Transit Study Amendment Act of 2023](#) aims to address limited transportation access, recognizing it as a key root cause of hunger and food insecurity. The study mandates the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to assess public transit access to grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods across the District by surveying at least 500 residents living in areas with limited food access.²²

■ **Nourish DC Collaborative**

Launched in 2021, the Nourish DC Collaborative was created in partnership with the Government of the District of Columbia to support the development of a robust ecosystem of locally owned food businesses, neighborhood vibrancy, and health equity in D.C. communities, especially in neighborhoods underserved by grocery stores and other food businesses.²³ To achieve a more equitable food system in the District, this collaborative helps with financing, technical assistance, and grants. Awarded grants support grocery stores, food incubators, corner stores, cooperative business, farmers' markets, food delivery businesses, urban farms, food processors, food hubs, restaurants, and caterers.



Since launching in September 2021, Nourish DC Collaborative has financed over \$16 million with the support of lending partners Capital Impact Partners, CDC Small Business Finance, City First Enterprises, EatsPlace, the Latino Economic Development Center, and Washington Area Community Investment Fund; provided technical assistance to over 600 food-based businesses; and funded grants in excess of \$600,000 to more than 20 food businesses.²⁴

■ **Food Access Fund**

The purpose of the Food Access Fund (FAF) Grant is to increase equitable access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food by securing grocery stores and restaurants; support existing small businesses; attract new businesses; increase the District's tax base; create new job opportunities for District residents; and transform designated emerging commercial corridors into thriving and inviting neighborhood centers. The FAF Grant will support qualified businesses with capital for tenant improvements related to expansion of operations into a new location in an area identified as having low food access (as set forth in the act), with priority given to locations in Ward 7 or Ward 8.²⁵ For fiscal year (FY) 2023, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development awarded \$5 million to six local food businesses in its fourth and final round of funding.²⁶

■ **Supermarket Incentive Tax**

The Supermarket Tax Exemption Act of 2000 waives certain taxes and fees for grocery stores built in specific neighborhoods.²⁷ Intended to incentivize development and investment in areas lacking access to groceries and fresh food, it has been unsuccessful in attracting new retailers to Wards 7 and 8. The Supermarket Tax Incentives Amendment Act of 2021 was proposed in the FY 2022 Budget Support Act of 2021. This proposed amendment revised the definition of an eligible area for the tax incentive, amended the definition of a supermarket, requires the Mayor to submit a plan to D.C. Council if it is determined that there is an area that warrants investment but is not an eligible area under the law, and requires that a supermarket with the incentive accept public benefit program payments.²⁸ The stated purpose of the change is to improve the Supermarket Tax Incentive program by "refining the eligible geographies to target areas with the greatest

need for new grocers and add community-focused requirements for grocers.”²⁹

D.C. Hunger Solutions supports making changes to the Supermarket Tax Incentive program to make it more tailored to attracting food retailers to Wards 7 and 8.

■ **Healthy Corner Stores**

According to USDA SNAP-Ed Connection, many families rely heavily on corner stores for food purchases in communities without access to supermarkets, farmers’ markets, or stores where fresh produce

and healthy items are commonly sold.³⁰ The Healthy Corners program operated by D.C. Central Kitchen delivers produce to corner stores in the District’s low-income communities, offering fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables to store owners at wholesale prices and in smaller quantities than a conventional distributor, making this a more affordable and accessible option for the consumer.³¹ The Healthy Corners program also offers a “SNAP Match” for program recipients to receive a \$5 coupon for every \$5 spent using their SNAP dollars.³²

The Role of Local Farmers, Growers, Producers, in Addressing Grocery Store Access in D.C.

Statement Attributed to Gail Taylor, Owner and Operator of Three Part Harmony Farm

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed a lot of vulnerabilities in the complex logistics system that distributes food. With regard to grocery stores, the impact of restrictions on deliveries and disruptions in the supply chain alarmed many people of all economic backgrounds to just how quickly a city that does not produce its own food can find itself with nothing left on the shelves.

The shock resulted in a greater appreciation of local farmers: We have a passion for growing beautiful, tasty, nutrient-dense produce and distributing it to as many people as we can in the community with very little waste. There was a huge surge in demand for local produce during that time. It is waning a bit as people go back to grocery stores and busy lives, but I think the greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of local farmers to our food security remains in spirit.

I see “grocery store” as a broad term that encompasses everything from the large chains to smaller neighborhood stores and co-ops, which I have experience co-owning. What’s true for most of the stores that sell food staples and fresh produce is that they receive deliveries from distributors, not directly from farmers. Most of my peers are producing on a scale that is too small to be part of that large distribution network.

I am always surprised when someone asks me if I would like to off-load my “extras” to food recovery organizations or those that distribute produce in parts of our city that don’t have as many grocery stores. Besides

giving away 10 percent of our weekly subscription boxes for free to low-income families, we do a weekly donation that is picked up by the Catholic Worker community in Petworth. When there are occasionally extras, I take them home that week so that I also can have fresh vegetables in my refrigerator.

Going back to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when shelves were bare and an overly complicated distribution system was at a standstill, I, along with my peers, raised money in a grassroots effort, and before monies were even deposited, began harvesting vegetables and delivering them to organizations that were able to stay open at that time.

Local farmers can and should be part of the way our community is nourished. As a low-income person myself, I know that when I walk into a grocery store I can’t buy everything I want and sometimes not even everything I need, even when I live in a neighborhood where I can walk to three grocery stores from my house. The pain point of prices that don’t match my wages doesn’t change simply from access. Now, I’ve never lived in a part of the city that doesn’t have enough grocery stores and I absolutely do not want to undermine the voices of people who are asking for better shopping options besides corner stores and liquor stores.

What I would like to see is a more broad discussion about food sovereignty and the fact that giving people a place for commerce is only part of the solution.

Recommendations for Improving Grocery Store Access

- **Fully fund Give SNAP a Raise:** The Give SNAP a Raise Amendment Act was signed into legislation in January 2023, increasing the maximum monthly benefit amount for SNAP clients by 10 percent.³³ The amount of the increase varies by household size and income, with the average recipient receiving an extra \$47 starting February 23, 2024.

Due to the ongoing hunger cliff as a result of the end of many pandemic-era program flexibilities, District SNAP participants have lost an estimated \$13 million dollars per month in benefits.³⁴ Give SNAP a Raise also supports small and large retailers, as SNAP has a proven record of generating business.³⁵ D.C. Hunger Solutions continues to support increasing SNAP benefits by 10 percent in the District using federal and local funds.

The benefit was available through the end of the fiscal year 2024, which was September 30, 2024. As of October 1, all SNAP households are receiving their regular SNAP allotment without the additional temporary benefit.³⁶

D.C. Hunger Solutions recommends ongoing, nonlapsing funding of Give SNAP a Raise.

- **Pass the Food Access by Public Transit Study Amendment Act of 2023:** D.C. Hunger Solutions strongly supports this initiative, as neighborhoods — particularly those east of the Anacostia River — continue to face significant barriers to transportation. D.C. Hunger Solutions acknowledges that lack of access to reliable transportation is a crucial social determinant of health and a primary contributor to hunger. As highlighted in the Ward 8 Community Economic Development Report, 21.2 percent of respondents reported needing assistance with transportation access, underscoring the urgency of this issue.
- **Adopt Food as Medicine (Medicaid 1115 Demonstration Waiver):** “Food as Medicine” is a concept that highlights the idea of using food to prevent, manage, and treat diet-related disease by focusing on the understanding that diet and nutrition play a fundamental role in maintaining health, preventing chronic conditions, and even reversing

certain diseases. The approach encourages the integration of nutritious, whole foods — such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins — into daily diets to enhance well-being and prevent medical issues. According to the 2024 Food Research & Action Center [report](#), many state and local anti-hunger organizations are collaborating with health³⁷care providers to connect patients with food and nutrition resources.³⁸

Grocery stores play a key role in food as medicine by increasing access to healthy, nutritious foods needed to treat diet-related illness, as well as offering alternative methods to patronizing stores — such as online shopping/ordering — and access to nutritionists and dietitians.



- **Increase funding for the Nourish DC Collaborative:** In addition to the funds already earmarked for the Nourish DC Collaborative, D.C. Hunger Solutions recommends that the D.C. Council continues to invest additional funding to support small, locally owned food-based businesses with an emphasis on Black-, Latinx-, and Indigenous-owned businesses. As the Nourish DC Collaborative specifically focuses on investing in locally owned food businesses and helps address the grocery gap in Wards 7 and 8, greater funding is critical to ensuring that food-insecure neighborhoods receive the loans and grants they need to create lasting, increased food access. Increasing funding specifically for the Nourish DC Collaborative is crucial because, even though there are a variety of funds aimed at increasing

retailers and business, this is the only one specifically for grocery access. Others, such as the Food Access Fund, also support businesses such as sit-down restaurants.

■ **Increase coordination to expand program participation:** D.C.

Hunger Solutions recommends that future data-sharing and collaborative initiatives include food advocacy groups and community organizations as well as the agencies that oversee program execution. Policy and community groups with greater capacity would then be able to aid agencies in outreach efforts and further increase program participation. As participation increases, data collection on programs can better inform policy needs and address the grocery gap more holistically. Navigating the social safety net is a full-time job, and this burden should not be put on residents who are just trying to make ends meet. Such coordination among programs, partners, and agencies, is critical to full utilization of the federal nutrition programs by residents and should be a priority of all state agencies that operate nutrition and anti-poverty programs to help residents living in the District.

■ **Convene a multisector task force that includes government officials, food-related business owners, and Wards 7 and 8 residents, to examine grocery store development in Wards 7 and 8:** This task force should submit a formal report to the Mayor and D.C. Council with ideas for identifying barriers and possible solutions, reviewing the current and proposed actions detailed in this report, and proposing other innovative solutions.



■ **Invest more in public transportation infrastructure in Wards 7 and 8, including more routes for buses and rail:**

Planning should prioritize these wards for being the areas with the lowest grocery store access. Along with infrastructure, the frequency and reliability of public transportation must be reviewed and prioritized.

■ **Ensure the continued availability of healthy food by supporting other sources of food access:** Other sources include small footprint grocery stores, healthy corner stores, and community gardens. This includes budgetary investment and supporting expansion of varied food sources and programs supporting increased local food access in schools and child care centers.

■ **Invest in grocery cooperatives:** A grocery or food cooperative (co-op) is a type of grocery store that is collectively owned and democratically controlled by its members, who are usually customers of the store. Co-ops are totally independent and owned by the community members focused on their community — nourishing everyone according to their budget and cooking style.³⁹

■ **Engage communities for their input:** Communities must be included in the development and implementation of any new program or retailer to ensure its acceptance and use by residents. Moreover, officials should study what unofficial community solutions have already been developed. An answer to food access in Wards 7 and 8 may already exist and just needs to be formalized and scaled. This also ensures that all programs are empowering residents.

Conclusion

In our previous grocery report, *Still Minding the Grocery Gap in D.C. — A 2023 Update*, D.C. Hunger Solutions underscored the lack of meaningful action to address grocery store access on the part of the District of Columbia, pointing to the lack of decisive action to address long-standing inequities in grocery access. We emphasized the urgent need for sustained efforts to ensure equitable access to grocery stores, particularly in underserved neighborhoods and communities with low incomes east of the Anacostia River. This year's findings reveal that these inequities persist, as the scarcity of grocery stores and limited access to healthy food options continue to disproportionately impact communities of color, exacerbating health disparities and contributing to higher rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. The economic consequences are also significant, as these gaps in food access hinder community vitality and limit the potential for local economic growth in these areas.

Closing these gaps requires comprehensive, systemic change — encompassing policy reforms, targeted investment, and public-private partnerships — to develop sustainable solutions that address both immediate food needs and long-term community health. Ensuring all D.C. residents have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food is not only essential for individual well-being but also fundamental to building a just, thriving, and resilient city for all.

However, D.C. Hunger Solutions remains encouraged that the District will continue taking meaningful steps to address this long-standing issue. These efforts must



represent a vital shift toward ensuring food justice and reflect the District's growing commitment to supporting underserved communities while closing the grocery gap and expanding access to fresh, affordable food for all residents.

Additionally, this report notes a continued presence of large grocery store chains in the District. While their presence is important, D.C. Hunger Solutions urges policymakers to continue prioritizing new and innovative solutions — such as incentivizing smaller, community-based food outlets and supporting alternative food distribution models such as Healthy Corner Stores — that can better reach neighborhoods still lacking full-service grocery stores.

The grocery gap must be addressed through sustained, collaborative efforts that ensure every resident in the District of Columbia has reliable access to nutritious food.

Endnotes

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