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## Feeding Texas Network Backs Major Hunger-Fighting Wins During 2023 Legislative Session

*New laws will improve SNAP access and increase funding for emergency food distribution.*

**June 22, 2023 (DALLAS)** – With the support of the Feeding Texas network of food banks and anti-hunger champions across the state, the Texas Legislature passed several new laws that will prevent hunger for Texans experiencing food insecurity.

“This year’s legislative session was our most successful since Texas food banks came together as a network over 20 years ago to engage state lawmakers in the fight against hunger,” **said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding Texas.** “We were honored to have overwhelming bipartisan support for these anti-hunger policies, which were informed by Texans with lived experience of hunger. Regardless of political affiliation, we can all agree that food should not be an impossible choice.”

The network successfully advocated for three bills and increased funding for food distribution, priorities identified by Texas food banks and other advocates ahead of the session. These priorities included:

- 1. Updating the SNAP Vehicle Asset Test ([HB 1287](#)):** Texas uses a Vehicle Asset Test to determine SNAP eligibility, placing limits on the value of the vehicles that a household may own and still qualify for the program. **HB 1287 makes a one-time inflationary adjustment to the Vehicle Asset Test to better reflect today’s car values**, increasing limits from \$15,000 to \$22,500 for the first car and from \$4,650 to \$8,700 for additional vehicles. The bill was authored by Rep. Ryan Guillen and sponsored by Sen. César Blanco.
- 2. Implementing pre-release SNAP registration ([HB 1743](#)):** Early access to SNAP benefits ensures formerly incarcerated Texans have immediate resources for food so they can begin rebuilding their lives. **HB 1743 supports people exiting the criminal justice system by allowing eligible individuals to apply for SNAP before their release so that they have access to food upon release.** This supports the reentry process and reduces recidivism. The bill was authored by Rep. Jeff Leach and sponsored by Sen. Royce West.

3. **Increasing funds for produce rescue:** The Surplus Agricultural Products Grant helps food banks rescue surplus or unsellable produce from Texas farmers for distribution to hungry Texans. 100% of program funds go to farmers and transportation providers to offset the cost of harvesting, storage, packaging, and freight. **The network achieved a \$10.2M increase in funding for the Surplus Agricultural Products Grant, doubling funds to \$20.4M for the biennium.** This is a win-win-win for hungry Texans, farmers, and the environment.
4. **Exempting state transportation-related taxes and fees for food banks (HB 3599):** State transportation-related fees are significant food bank expenses. **HB 3599 will give food banks an exemption from fuel taxes and registrations for their fleets, meaning food banks can reinvest those costs into feeding their communities.** The bill was authored by Rep. Shawn Thierry and sponsored by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa.

“These legislative victories represent the hard work of many different stakeholders and are responsive to the needs expressed by our communities,” **Cole said.** “We are grateful to our bill authors, anti-hunger advocates, and all of the organizations that came together to help get these priorities across the finish line. From small, rural communities to major metropolitan areas, these new laws will help feed Texas families and support food banks across the state. While the fight for food security continues, we’re one step closer to a hunger-free Texas.”

“For the nearly 700,000 people in North Texas that face food insecurity, these legislative changes will be significant in helping to ensure families have access to the nutritious food they need to thrive, while expanding the capacity of the North Texas Food Bank to serve more neighbors,” said **Trisha Cunningham, President and CEO for the North Texas Food Bank.** “Food insecurity is a complex issue, but this recent legislative session demonstrates the collective impact we can have when we come together to work toward hunger-free and healthy communities in Texas.”

To identify our network’s priorities for the 2023 legislative session, Feeding Texas met with community focus groups composed of Texans experiencing food insecurity from all corners of the state. We asked participants about the troubles they face and collected insights from their lived experience.

HB 1287 and HB 1743 were also priorities for the Texas Food Policy Roundtable, a coalition of more than 60 organizations dedicated to ending hunger in Texas.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed HB 1287, HB 1743, and HB 3599 into law this month. The new laws take effect Sept. 1, 2023.

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*Feeding Texas leads a unified effort for a hunger-free Texas. Learn more and find your local food bank at [www.feedingtexas.org](http://www.feedingtexas.org).*

### **About North Texas Food Bank**

The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) is a top-ranked nonprofit hunger-relief organization that sources, packages and distributes food through a diverse network of more than 400 feeding partners including food pantries and community organizations across 13 North Texas counties.

The organization also provides food to children, seniors and families through various direct-delivery programs, including mobile pantries.

In its last fiscal year, the NTFB provided access to nearly 137 million nutritious meals, a 9% percent increase over the prior year. In response to the ongoing elevated hunger crisis, the organization has launched a \$500 million campaign, Nourish North Texas, to provide more food for today and hope for tomorrow by addressing the barriers to food security that our neighbors face.

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