



## Feeding Texas Network Announces 2025 State Legislative Priorities

*Texas lawmakers can help fight hunger in the 89<sup>th</sup> legislative session.*

**TEXAS** – Bill filing begins this week for the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. As state lawmakers begin to introduce legislation, Feeding Texas calls on our elected officials to back policy solutions that prevent hunger and tackle the root causes of food insecurity.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released its [annual study](#) measuring food security. The report shows that Texas has the second-highest rate of food insecurity in the nation at 16.9%. This is a 1.4% increase compared to last year's food insecurity rate and it means that in Texas, 1 in 6 households are food insecure.

"The rising cost of food and other household expenses, such as rent and utilities, is making it increasingly difficult for Texans to pay the bills," **said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding Texas, the state association of food banks.** "The state's significant backlog in processing SNAP applications is preventing many from accessing the food benefits they need and only contributes to the issue. Food banks are doing everything within their means to meet the growing need in their communities as more and more families seek emergency food. As food insecurity rises across the state, it is crucial that Texas lawmakers support hunger solutions in the upcoming legislative session and make it easier, *not harder*, for families to access food resources."

This year, Feeding Texas is advancing policy solutions to both prevent hunger and tackle its causes and consequences. These legislative priorities are supported by our network of 20 food banks, which serves all 254 counties in Texas. The agenda is also supported by the Texas Food Policy Roundtable (TFPR), a coalition of over 80 organizations dedicated to ending hunger in Texas. TFPR includes leaders from the food banking, retail, nonprofit, education, and healthcare sectors.

The first section of our shared legislative agenda focuses on **increasing access to food and improving health outcomes**. The Feeding Texas network and TFPR are calling on lawmakers to:

1. **Eliminate the backlog of SNAP applications and increase efficiencies** by streamlining SNAP six-month eligibility checks with periodic reporting. Periodic reporting is a proven tool to reduce workload, save on administrative costs and enhance program integrity. Georgia recently implemented periodic reporting and saw a 25% reduction in workload for their eligibility staff. Applied to Texas' eligibility workforce, this change could save over \$33 million in state funds per year.

2. **Fight child hunger during the summer** by implementing Summer EBT. Nearly 1 in 4 Texas children experience hunger, which spikes in the summer because millions of children lose access to school meals. Summer EBT is a new program that would provide low-income families with children \$120 in food benefits during the summer.
3. **Improve health outcomes and reduce state healthcare costs** by developing a streamlined Medicaid reimbursement model that integrates food bank services into our healthcare system and enables doctors to prescribe healthy food.
4. **Modernize the eligibility system** by adequately funding the Texas Health and Human Service Commission's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) Exceptional Item #2 to fix problems with TIERS. System errors and glitches within TIERS, the system that enrolls Texans in SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF, have led to application processing delays and wrongful denials.

The second section of our legislative agenda focuses on **tackling the root causes of hunger**.

"We know that hunger does not occur in a vacuum," **Cole said**. "Hunger is closely linked to many other issues, including health, housing, financial security, and access to healthy, locally grown food. At Feeding Texas, we seek to provide food for today, tomorrow, and for a lifetime. This mission requires us to go beyond short-term solutions and to address the root causes of hunger, which can lead to long-term change."

Feeding Texas is working with partner organizations across the state who are experts on the following issues. Texas lawmakers can help address the root causes of hunger by supporting legislation to:

1. **Strengthen Our Local Food Systems:** Local food systems can help reduce food insecurity and increase resilience by reducing food waste, supporting local economies, improving food quality and making fresh, nutritious food more accessible to everyone.
2. **Increase Healthcare Access:** Hunger and health are deeply connected. Individuals facing food insecurity are more likely to experience adverse health effects and face barriers to accessing necessary health services.
3. **Ensure Housing Affordability:** Strengthening access to affordable, quality housing allows Texan to allocate more of their household budgets to other essential needs like food.
4. **Improve Financial Security:** As food prices continue to rise, financial security and economic stability are essential to ensure Texas households can meet their nutrition needs, thrive in the workforce, and save for the future.

"Hunger is a nonpartisan issue — it impacts every county in our state and Texans from all walks of life," **Cole said**. "While finding common ground in today's political climate may be challenging, we can all agree that all Texans deserve access to the nutritious food they need to live full, healthy lives. We have

the tools to solve hunger in Texas, and our neighbors facing food insecurity are counting on the Texas Legislature to act.”

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### **About Feeding Texas**

Feeding Texas is a network of 20 food banks and leads a unified effort for a hunger-free Texas. Learn more and find your local food bank at [feedingtexas.org](https://feedingtexas.org).

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

The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) is a leading nonprofit organization that fights hunger and provides children, seniors and families in North Texas access to nutritious food. For over 40 years, we have been at the forefront of hunger relief, committed to ensuring that no one in our community lacks access to healthy food. Our extensive network of 500 food pantries and organizations, volunteers, and donors enables us to deliver more than 100 million nutritious meals annually to those in need. Beyond just addressing hunger, we focus on nourishing lives by offering nutrition education, investing in our network partners, innovating solutions to eliminate hunger and advocating for policies that tackle the root causes of food insecurity.

Our dedication to excellence is reflected in our 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, highlighting our strong governance, integrity, and financial stability. Additionally, we are honored to be ranked 89th on Forbes' 2023 Top 100 Charities in America. As a proud member of Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief network, we are committed to ensuring everyone in North Texas has the nourishment needed to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. For more information, visit [www.ntfb.org](https://www.ntfb.org) or connect with us on social media @NorthTexasFoodBank.

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