



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 6586, An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
Human Services Committee**

**February 14, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Seminara, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **House Bill 6586, An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets. Over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$99 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$940 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and advance equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latinx communities, the Hartford Foundation supports basic human needs in our region, applying an equity lens to the systems and programs that address access to food, housing, physical and mental health care, and the digital divide.

**While the Foundation and other philanthropic organizations have and will continue to support this work, the state must lead the effort to prevent and eliminate food insecurity.** Public commitment must also address the interplay of basic human needs, including access to healthy, nutritious food, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations delivering these services.

To this end, the Foundation supports **House Bill 6586, An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance. While the Foundation recognizes that House Bill 6586's call to change the payment schedule for SNAP benefits so that beneficiaries receive benefits at multiple intervals during the month may help families budget their resources more effectively, it fails to adequately address the impact of growing food insecurity and inflated food prices on Connecticut families, especially families of color.**

Each year, the Foundation provides approximately \$7 million in basic human needs grants to support both regional and local agencies in Greater Hartford. This past year, the Foundation awarded more than \$1.4 million to support food programs that respond to emergency and short-term needs as well as food services during the holidays.



As we witnessed with long lines at food distribution sites during the height of COVID-19, many middle- and lower-income families struggle with food insecurity. In 2019, the food insecurity rate in Connecticut was 12 percent, while in Hartford it was 21.9 percent, with the next highest neighboring town being East Hartford at 13.6 percent.

While many people have gone back to work and the economy continues to recover, rapidly escalating food prices have created a new obstacle for Connecticut families. According to the USDA, food prices in 2022 have increased year-over-year an average of 11.4 percent, some categories (including eggs and poultry) reaching as high as 21.5 percent, with no categories reporting price decreases. These increases are expected to continue in 2023. Rising food prices also leaves a smaller proportion of incomes to address other needs.

Feeding America reports that the food insecurity rate in Greater Hartford may be as high as 16 percent. Preliminary food insecurity rates released by DataHaven (based on the DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey) indicate that as of August 2022, 17 percent of adults in Connecticut reported being food insecure. That number increased to 34 percent for Latino/a/x residents and 25 percent for Black residents statewide.

In November 2022, the Foundation awarded a three-year, \$550,000 to [Connecticut Foodshare](#) to support Greater Hartford food distribution and their Value-Added Product food rescue program that partners with growers and distributors to smooth out projected steep variations in revenue during the next three years. According to the demographic data and census tract information of Connecticut Foodbank's target population, an estimated 39 percent of their constituents are people of color.

In December 2022, the Foundation awarded \$200,000 over three years to [Hartford Food System \(HFS\)](#). Their work takes place throughout the Greater Hartford region, with a particular focus on Hartford. Hartford Food System works collaboratively with other nonprofit organizations to engage in a systems-based approach that focuses on the root causes for food system issues. HFS has been successful in engaging Hartford residents to promote food justice and an equitable food economy.

Having Hartford Foundation staff serves as members of the Connecticut 2Gen Advisory Board, the Foundation has long supported efforts to mitigate the effects of benefits cliffs. State and federal programs use of income measures to determine eligibility for public benefit programs can result in even small increases in income leading to abrupt decreases in access to public benefits—namely, benefits cliffs. **The Foundation supports House Bill 6586's provision to ensure that individuals receiving increases in their Social Security benefits do not lose their access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance.**

The Hartford Foundation is ready to partner with legislators, the administration, advocates, philanthropy and other stakeholders to prevent and eliminate food insecurity. We also invite policymakers to meet with us to understand and discuss how philanthropic dollars can fill gaps in equitable strategies to support Connecticut residents that may not be best suited for public dollars.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfpg.org](mailto:policy@hfpg.org) or 860-548-1888.