

Understanding Food Insecurity

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Introduction

- Food insecurity is a widespread issue plaguing roughly 12.3% of households in the United States, which is a total of roughly 15.6 million families.
- It is defined as the limited or uncertain access to adequate and nutritious food. At times, It is struggling to find any food at all and wondering when your next meal will be.
- Food insecure areas tend to have less supermarkets and convenience stores, resulting in lower availability healthy food options like fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and more.
 - These areas typically have more convenience stores than supermarkets.

FOOD INSECURITY: A GROWING ISSUE

FOOD INSECURITY IS A WIDESPREAD ISSUE PLAGUING HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. IT IS DEFINED AS LIMITED OR UNCERTAIN ACCESS TO ADEQUATE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD.

12.3% OF U.S. HOUSEHOLDS ARE AFFECTED

15.6 MILLION households struggle to find their next meal.



FOOD-INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS HAVE LESS ACCESS TO:

- 1) Grocery stores and supermarkets.
- 2) Healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- 3) Reliable transportation.

IT IS MORE THAN HUNGER

Research has shown that food insecurity is associated with lower academic achievement, mental health status, cognitive function, and a higher risk of malnutrition and chronic diseases.



FIXING THE ISSUE

Reducing food insecurity will improve population health, reduce healthcare costs, and improve quality of life across the country.

REACH OUT TO YOUR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

DONATE TO AREA FOOD BANKS

VOLUNTEER FOR PROGRAMS THAT SUPPLY FOOD FOR THOSE IN NEED

Impacts on Health and Lifestyle

- Food insecurity is more than being hungry – it is a risk factor for multiple chronic diseases.
- Negative health outcomes include increased risk of obesity, type-2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), metabolic syndrome, heart disease, liver disease, higher prevalence of mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, and more.
- Additionally, studies have shown that type-2 diabetics experiencing food insecurity are less effective in managing blood sugar over time.
- Living in close proximity of a large supermarket or grocery store is associated with greater fruit and vegetable intake, while living near a convenience/corner store is negatively associated with fruit and vegetable consumption.

My Advocacy Efforts

- Reaching out to MO Senator Roy Blunt to support bill S-203 “Healthy Food Access for All Americans”. This bill is meant to establish a new tax credit and grant program to stimulate investment and healthy food options in food deserts
- Keeping the conversation going – I spoke about the issue with the people I know.
- Collaborating with St. Louis Area Foodbank to distribute food to those in need in the community.

At-Risk Populations

- Food insecurity is most commonly seen in rural and urban areas. It is experienced by all types of people, but research has shown that some populations are more affected than others.
- African Americans are three times more likely to experience food insecurity. Other ethnic minority groups also have a higher risk than white Americans.
- The three biggest factors that increase a families risk of being food insecure are having a low income, being a single parent household, and having multiple children.
- Food insecure areas tend to be those with lower economic development, average income, socioeconomic status, and education.

Call to Action!

- Find out who your local and state representatives are and urge them to support the fight against food insecurity! Show them that nobody deserves to go hungry in this world.
- Volunteer at local food banks! If this isn't possible for you, donations in the form of food or money are always appreciated by organizations.
- KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING! The more we talk about it, the more attention it will get.

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