

## Food Insecurity Resolution

In the Jewish tradition, responding to hunger is a mitzvah, and many examples throughout our liturgy speak to the requirement to provide food for those in need. Ta'anit 20b tells us that "when Rav Huna would eat a meal, he would open his door and say, 'Whoever is in need, let that person come and eat.'"<sup>1</sup> Also, the Book of Ruth provides an example of giving excess to those in need.<sup>2</sup>

Food insecurity is a term used to define the economic or social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate and nutritious food. Simply put, food insecurity means one is unsure of when or whether to expect the next meal.

Food insecurity, a global problem, exists throughout the developed world, including the United States, Canada and Israel. This problem is influenced by multiple factors, including poverty, rising food and housing costs, unemployment, chronic health conditions, racism and discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Levels of food insecurity differ greatly according to race, ethnicity, location and community.

Current statistics indicate that one in five children in the United States faces hunger daily.<sup>4</sup> Other key groups affected in alarming numbers by food insecurity include college students, active-duty military families and veterans, senior citizens, Native Americans / First Nations and disadvantaged populations.

While visits to community food banks, food shelves and food pantries are dramatically increasing, there is a lack of community and government resources to stock them. These food distribution facilities find that they have no choice but to limit access. Thus, food insecurity is becoming more widespread.

**Whereas** our sacred and immutable law commands us to see and address the unmet needs of our fellow human beings; and

**Whereas** many of our community members suffer constant food shortages, despite the wealth and resources of our societies; and

**Whereas** our Sisterhood Affiliates have many resources available to begin to address this problem.

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**Therefore, Be It Resolved, Women’s League for Conservative Judaism, through its Regions, Sisterhood Affiliates and all its members, wishes to build a foundation to end hunger in all segments of the population and to promote the following actions:**

1. Develop programs within Women’s League, its Sisterhood Affiliates and Regions, to raise awareness of the severity and pain of global food insecurity, and
2. Work with local synagogues and clergy to educate congregations about food insecurity, and
3. Encourage Regions and Sisterhood Affiliates to add food insecurity programs to their budgets, and
4. Assist local, national and international organizations (with volunteers and donations) to provide the best and most effective ways to alleviate hunger in the community, and
5. Develop an ongoing relationship with local farmers to salvage and distribute excess food products, and
6. Work with local schools to determine how to best support children in need, and
7. Contact government representatives and advocate for effective local, state, provincial and national legislation designed to alleviate food insecurity.

## ADDENDUM

### Food Insecurity Definition

#### **USDA Economic Research Service: Committee on National Statistics / CNSTAT:**

**“Food insecurity—the condition assessed in the food security survey and represented in USDA food security reports—is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.”<sup>5</sup>**

The **Canadian Income Survey** released in 2023 showed that, in Canada, 8.7 million people, including 2.1 million children, lived in a food insecure household.

According to **Israel’s annual poverty report**, 2.6 million people live below the poverty line and go to bed hungry every night. The war, which began Oct. 7, 2023, has only exacerbated the problem for Israelis.

Food insecurity and accompanying nutritional deficits have a direct impact on **school-age children’s** ability to learn. Food insecurity in public schools is not just limited to minorities, but also includes families with financial limitations and anyone living in homeless shelters.

According to a recent report of The Food Group (a nonprofit organization providing access to fresh, sustainable food), **“College students** are a less visible segment of community members experiencing hunger.” College students experiencing food insecurity use local food banks and food shelves, and school food pantries, if available.

The Fall 2020 issue of MAZON NEWS™ found (as of 2020) “that nearly 1.4 million veterans rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to keep food on the table and too many other **Veterans** struggle with hunger without assistance from programs ....” And, the Military Family Advisory Network’s (mfan.org) “latest study shows that one in five military and veteran families experience(s) food insecurity—rising to one in four among active duty military families—compared to one in eight U.S. households.”

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) reports that **Senior citizens** are stretching their budgets, and some seniors must choose between buying food and purchasing prescription medications.

**Native Americans** (as reported by organizations such as Running Strong for American Indian Youth, Native American Veterans Assistance, Navaho Relief Fund and Southwest Reservation Aid /SWRA), often lack adequate food resources, due to inaccessibility of large supermarkets / grocery stores. These communities are often called “food deserts.”<sup>6</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. "Taanit, 20b, The Willian Davidson Talmud," Sefaria, Koren - Steinsaltz, Accessed August 26, 2024, <https://www.sefaria.org/Taanit.20b?lang=bi>.
2. "The Book of Ruth," Sefaria, Accessed August 26, 2024, <https://www.sefaria.org/topics/the-book-of-ruth>.
3. "Causes of Food Insecurity," (Based on 2024 Elevating Voices: Insights Report), Accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>.
4. "Hunger in America," Hunger Research, Map the Meal Gap 2024, Accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>.  
& Economic Research Service: [ers.usda.gov](https://ers.usda.gov).
5. "Definitions of Food Security: Ranges of Food Security and Food Insecurity, CNSTAT Review and Recommendations," USDA Economic Research Service, Accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>.
6. John Reinan, "More than 1.6 million Minnesotans lack access to a Grocery Store." The Minnesota Star Tribune, May 6, 2017. <https://www.startribune.com/hundreds-of-thousands-of-minnesotans-live-in-food-deserts/421535133>.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Some organizations working to alleviate hunger:**

MAZON

World Central Kitchens

No Kid Hungry

Meals on Wheels (in local communities)

President Biden's Effort to End Hunger by 2030

Save the Children

Feeding America

LA Food Bank

Stamp Out Hunger Program: (sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers)

### **In Israel:**

Latet

Leket Israel

Feed Israel

Meir Panim