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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Bolstering Emergency Food Climate & Disaster Resilience: \$32m one-time investment.

Dear Governor Newsom,

We the undersigned respectfully request \$32 million in one-time funding to build the long-term resilience and capacity of the emergency food network to feed low-income Californians during disasters. This investment will help foodbanks across the state fund **permanent on-site back up systems to sustain emergency food operations during climate crises and other disasters:** back-up generators, power storage, clean vehicles, and other one-time investments that build the long-term resilience of food banks to feed people when they need it most. In the past, the state has experienced threats that could have led to total food loss which underscore the urgency of investing before catastrophic disruption occurs.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis that [raised hunger to an astonishing nearly 1 in 4 California households](#), we were deeply concerned about the ability for our state's food banks to support people experiencing disasters such as wildfires, mudslides, and human-caused emergencies caused by power safety power shutoffs. Yet the coronavirus has made this request even more urgent and necessary as food loss continues to increase exponentially due to COVID-19 making the hunger crisis that much more catastrophic. The pandemic has caused a sustained surge in the need for emergency food, with many food banks reporting a doubling or [even tripling in community members served](#), especially among many Californians newly hungry because of [unprecedented loss of employment](#). Among them [immigrants, farm workers](#) and other disenfranchised low-income Californians experience disproportionate consequences from disasters. They have been [frequently barred from federal disaster aid](#), and even if eligible the [chilling effect from public charge and other attacks has driven many families to food banks](#), instead of seeking public benefits.

As we continue to experience and recognize catastrophic events as the "new normal", it also requires us to do more to deal with the consequences of those events. Pre-COVID-19 we were already experiencing record-breaking climate crises of fire storms from Paradise to San Diego, the human-made crisis of Public Safety Power Shutoffs, and previous [federal government shutdowns](#) that created unprecedented hunger across California – deepening food insecurity for those already in need, and causing hunger far up the income scale as families lost their jobs and homes. The COVID-19 pandemic made hunger worse as we simultaneously experienced a historic catastrophic wildfire season and widespread blackouts not seen for two decades. Unfortunately, these disasters have highlighted the lack of federal and state support for vulnerable low-income Californians in

need of food during and after disasters.¹ COVID-19 has also underscored how important food banks are on the front lines long before and after a disaster ends to keep Californians healthy and fed.

State support for emergency food continues to be critical given limitations on federal funding. The federal support during disasters is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) program. Unfortunately, this program does not provide the appropriate type of food that people need when they are displaced or lacking regular cooking facilities.² Similarly, although the state's leadership on Disaster CalFresh is nationally recognized,³ Disaster CalFresh still requires a Presidential Declaration for Individual Assistance be in place, and the benefit is only available to households once in a 30-day period following a disaster.

We believe the prevalence of hunger caused by natural and human-made disasters require a proportionate state response. The seemingly unrelenting string of disasters, punctuated by our current pandemic emergency, highlight the spike in hunger that occurs when low- income people lose their food, and food bank facilities and staff are themselves affected, limiting their capacity at just time to elevated need..

For these reasons, we seek your support for \$32 million one-time to California Department of Social Services to bolster the resilience of the state's emergency food network so that we are able to keep California communities fed when they need us most.

If you have any questions or need further information please feel free to contact my Legislative Director, Israel Landa, at Israel.landa@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



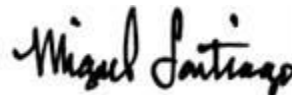
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¹ Auditor of the State of California. 2019-103. <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2019-103/summary.html>.

² Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45408.pdf>.

³ The National Council of State Legislatures highlights the work by CDSS as well as AB 607 (Gloria, 2017). https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/statefed/Emergency_Food_Assistance_Aug2017.pdf.



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