May 14, 2021

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 1
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 3
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for $110 Million in Funding for Food Banks in the 2021-2022 Budget Act

Dear Budget Leaders:

We are writing to request $110 million in one-time funding for California Food Banks in the 2021-2022 Budget.

Californians across the state are in the midst of a full-blown hunger crisis and food banks have been on the frontlines making sure families have food to eat. In 2020, California’s food banks have labored to provide our communities with over one billion pounds of food.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has increased by almost three times and the number of families in need has skyrocketed. Recent data show that more than 25 percent of California households are currently experiencing food insecurity, and in truth, the COVID-19 pandemic has only further highlighted the existing food insecurity and hunger struggles that millions of Californians have experienced for decades.

The ongoing global health crisis has further exacerbated racial and ethnic disparities as 34.9 percent of Latinx and nearly 40 percent of Black households with children face food insecurity. Currently, the food banks are seeing double the demand for food resources, and food banks expect this demand to remain the same as the number of families struggling to pay rent and meet basic needs continues to grow.

To address the challenges faced by far too many vulnerable Californians we as state leaders must strengthen our social safety net by securing sufficient funding to meet basic needs for families.
Last year, California food banks served a staggering 1 billion pounds of food, a 74 percent increase overall from before the pandemic. Community demand remains extremely high: the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank reports still serving three times the number of people before COVID-19, and the Alameda County Community Food Bank anticipates record demand to continue for at least another year.

At the same time, food banks are facing a cliff in community donations and federal foods. Even with the American Rescue Plan, food banks expect nearly a 50 percent drop in federal foods available from the USDA. Community food donations have also dropped significantly, as many families who have donated now rely on food banks to eat, and the familiar barrels have been restricted out of public health safety. The San Luis Obispo Food Bank reported, for example, that they lost 25 percent of their donations during this time of record need.

Continued state support is therefore critical. Prior investments have enabled food banks to provide families healthy food in contact-free distributions, but will quickly be exhausted. $110 million is needed to meet the projected statewide demand throughout the upcoming 2021 - 2022 budget year.

As food banks continue to embrace providing families with life-saving resources, California must expand investment in keeping food on the table. Our failure to do so will widen the economic, health, and social inequities of our communities for years to come. Food is fundamental to all else – it fuels learning for our children, strengthens our older adults, improves all of our health, and builds community.

To rebuild our economy, one-time funding of $110 million is a vital investment to address food insecurity and empower our food banks’ continued support of our most vulnerable during these challenging times. Additionally, this funding will support critical jobs in the hard-hit food service sector while providing food for those in need.

We request your full consideration and strong support of this request for our California families in need.

Sincerely,

Buffy Wicks
Assemblymember, 15th District

John Laird
State Senator, 17th District
Bob Archuleta,  
State Senator, 32nd District

Cecilia Aguiar-Curry  
Assemblymember, 4th District

Patricia Bates  
State Senator, 36th District

Rebecca Bauer-Kahan  
Assemblymember, 16th District

Josh Becker  
State Senator, 13th District

Steve Bennett  
Assemblymember, 37th District

Marc Berman  
Assemblymember, 24th District

Tasha Boerner Horvath  
Assemblymember, 76th District

Anna Caballero  
State Senator, 12th District

Wendy Carrillo  
Assemblymember, 51st District

Phillip Chen  
Assemblymember, 55th District

David Chiu  
Assemblymember, 17th District

Ken Cooley  
Assemblymember, 8th District

Jim Frazier  
Assemblymember, 11th District
Monique Limón
State Senator, 19th District

Devon Mathis
Assemblymember, 26th District

Janet Nguyen
Assemblymember, 72nd District

Jim Nielsen
State Senator, 4th District

Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblymember, 65th District

Eloise Gomez Reyes
Assemblymember, 47th District

Luz Rivas
Assemblymember, 39th District

Freddie Rodriguez
Assemblymember, 52nd District

Mark Stone
Assemblymember, 29th District

Thomas Umberg
State Senator, 34th District

Scott Wiener
State Senator, 11th District

Henry Stern
State Senator, 27th District

Brian Maienschein
Assemblymember, 77th District