

Temple Emanu-El Advocacy Statement on Food Insecurity and Hunger

Overview

The Advocacy Team is seeking approval from the Board of Trustees to educate and advocate on policies that combat food insecurity and hunger in our community, state, and nation. Temple Emanu-El has long been committed to addressing food insecurity in our city and across the country. From our earliest days, hunger relief has been at the heart of our mission, from the Dallas Infant Welfare and Milk Association in the early 20th century to our annual Hunger Relief Drive and the Jill Stone Community Garden today. Every day, Temple strives to help families put food on their tables and to build a more just and compassionate community. The Advocacy Team would like to take our work further to engage in policy advocacy before our federal, state, and local government entities to seek greater food assistance programs for families suffering from hunger and food insecurity.

The Food Insecurity Problem

The term “food insecurity” means “regular lack of access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy lifestyle.”¹ “...A food insecure family may be forced to skip meals, be unable to afford balanced meals, or be worried their food will run out before they can afford to buy more.”² Food insecurity has been linked to obesity, diabetes, nutrient deficiencies, low fruit and vegetable intake, and other indicators of unhealthy diets. In children, food insecurity and the resulting hunger also “derail a student’s concentration, memory, mood, and motor skills” and is linked to poorer overall health.³

According to the North Texas Food Bank (NTFB), Texas leads the country in hunger, with 5.4 million Texans who are food insecure, one-third of whom are children. Moreover, Dallas and Tarrant counties combined rank third in the nation for food insecurity, with 1.3 million people in our region facing hunger, a staggering 12% increase from just last year.

⁴ According to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee,

statewide, one in five children face hunger, and NTFB estimates that the number is closer to one in four children. Our state’s senior population aged 60 and older is not immune to hunger and food insecurity; NTFB estimates that close to 547,000 of this age group suffer from food insecurity and hunger. This is the third-highest rate in the country.

With a new administration in Washington, D.C. with policies to reduce federal spending, and with states in many cases dependent on the federal government to fund many food access and distribution programs, our advocacy to help support policies that feed hungry people or oppose policies that reduce spending on programs that help to alleviate hunger and food insecurity is important and in accord with our Jewish values.

Our Values

Our tradition compels us to see the face of the Divine in every person and to respond to suffering with compassion and action. Judaism teaches that feeding the hungry is not merely an act of charity, but a core obligation rooted in our deepest values. The Torah commands us: “If your kin becomes poor and their means fail, you shall uphold them” (Leviticus 25:35). And, in Deuteronomy 15:7-10, we are instructed that “if there is a needy person among you...Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin.”

From the laws of pe’ah, leaving the corners of our fields for the poor, to the prophetic call to “share your bread with the hungry” (Isaiah 58:7), Jewish texts insist that access to food is a matter of justice. We are taught to build a society where dignity and sustenance are not privileges but guaranteed to all. The Mishnah reminds us: “When you feed the hungry, it is as though you have fed the Divine” (Midrash Tannaim).

In the face of modern food insecurity, when millions, including children, go to bed hungry, our responsibility is clear. To be a Jewish community is to stand with the vulnerable and advocate for systems that ensure equitable access to nourishing food.

Positions Taken by Others in Our Movement

[Central Conference of American Rabbis](#)

[Religious Action Center](#)

[Women of Reform Judaism](#)

Our Advocacy

Temple Emanu-El remains committed to addressing hunger through direct service as we have for many years, while adding policy advocacy to eradicate hunger and food insecurity in our community, state, and country.

On July 4th, 2025, the “Big Beautiful Bill” the Federal Budget Reconciliation Bill, was signed into law and will have significant cuts to safety net programs for less fortunate Americans. One such cut is to the SNAP program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as Food Stamps. Over the next 10 years, \$186 billion will be cut from the program. Current law provides that the program is 100% paid by the Federal government, but going forward, states will have to pay between 5% and 25% of the costs of the program in their state. This means that Texas will have to add these costs to its next budget or families will see their benefits reduced or lose them entirely. There are many other changes to the program that many non-profits working in this space believe will cause many recipients to lose or have reduced benefits. The Center for Law and Social Policy, a non-profit advocacy organization, believes that ripple effects from these cuts will not only hurt the recipients but also negatively impact the grocery stores, farmers, food manufacturers, and others in the food chain, as recipients will be spending less if their benefits are denied or reduced. These are complicated issues, and we want to be able to add our voice to our policymakers in Texas and Washington.

Another issue that will come up is whether Texas will participate in the summer EBT program (Electronic Benefits Transfer) that provides supplemental money to SNAP recipients and other low income families with children to cover extra costs of feeding their children during summer months when school is not in session. Our Texas legislators, on a bipartisan basis, included the \$60 million in the budget for Texas to participate in this program and draw down an additional \$400 million from the federal government to cover

the rest of the costs of the program. The governor vetoed this expenditure. However, he indicated a willingness to revisit whether Texas should participate in the program at a later date.

There are many other programs that address food insecurity for families, and potentially new ideas for improved nutrition for those who are food insecure. We would want to learn about them and be able to support greater efforts to prevent food insecurity and help stop further cuts in food programs for low-income families. While the SNAP program is the nation’s largest and most effective anti-hunger program, serving over 41 million individuals every month, there are many other programs and funding opportunities that address hunger, nutrition, and food insecurity.⁵ With Congregational approval of this advocacy policy, we would advocate against funding cuts and unwarranted restrictions on eligibility for these programs to our state and federal legislators and the administrative agencies with regulatory authority over such programs. We would also explore ways to support programs that help to ensure all people have access to affordable and nutritional food, increasing the likelihood that they will be able to lead healthy lives.

Potential Partners.

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger
North Texas Food Bank
Religious Action Center
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas
Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions

Conclusion

Temple Emanu-El’s Advocacy Team seeks the Board of Trustees’ support to formally engage in food insecurity advocacy as an extension of our long-standing commitment to this work. At a time when hunger is rising and critical programs are under threat, we are called to act, not only through direct service but by addressing the root causes of food insecurity. Grounded in Jewish values and in partnership with respected organizations locally and nationally, we have a moral and spiritual obligation to use our voice in the public arena. By embracing this advocacy, we affirm our responsibility to help create a society where all families can access the food they need to thrive.

¹ Technoserve website, technoserve.org

² John Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future, foodsystemprimer.org

³ The Anne E. Casey Foundation, “Child Food Insecurity in America”, Report updated July 21, 2024.

⁴ North Texas Food Bank Blog, May 14, 2025

⁵ Examples of other Federal programs include WIC (women, infants, & children), Closing the Meal Gap Act, the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Food Donation Improvement Act, and the Healthy Food Access for All Americans Act.