

Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

David Lee



Running for:
**California State Assembly,
District 19**

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What do you think are the root causes of hunger, and what do you see as the government's role in addressing them?

I think socioeconomic and income inequality are the root causes of hunger. Within that, I think that healthy food is not promoted well, especially to working people who may not have time to grocery shop or have access to fresh produce. I think we are very lucky in San Francisco to have such an abundance of grocery stores, but many people across the country live in food deserts where they simply do not have access to fresh and nutritious food.

I believe that the government can help remedy some of these issues by increasing access to food like making it easier to sign up for CalFresh and working on programs to reduce stigma for using these types of programs.

If elected, how would you ensure coordination between the multiple government departments that fund and administer food assistance programs?

According to the US Department of Food and Agriculture, California ranks as one of the states with the lowest participation in SNAP benefits. There are simply too many barriers, whether they are administrative or social, that prevent people from enrolling in this vital program. As an educator, I also know that eligible college students are under-enrolled in the program. If elected, I would work to increase student participation in the program by finding ways to create more student exemptions and make sure that colleges are doing sufficient education and outreach to students.

Studies have shown food can be medicine. If elected, how do you plan to use your position to improve food-related health disparities?

If elected, I would work to expand Food is Medicine programming, especially as it relates to culturally competent practices. In AD-19, I would work to support existing models and help community organizations foster new opportunities to ensure that Californians are able to easily access nutritious food

Food banks statewide are stretched thin after managing a sustained need for food assistance since the onset of the pandemic. If elected to the State Legislature, what would you do to ensure that food banks have enough resources to feed those in need?

About one in five Californians is food insecure, and the pandemic only exacerbated the issue for food banks, who are now increasingly the go-to places for participants. As mentioned above, increasing meaningful access to CalFresh is a top priority for me. It would not only reduce the burden on food banks, but also allow Californians to purchase food from other stores. I would also support efforts like SB 600 (2023), which would have increased the minimum CalFresh benefit.