

Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

Dean Preston



Running for:
San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 5

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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?

Hunger is driven by systemic issues like low wages, lack of affordable housing, racism and discrimination, pushed forward by a capitalist system. People find themselves having to choose between paying for food or rent, or any other basic needs. Systemic racism worsens food insecurity, disproportionately affecting Black, Latinx, and indigenous communities, often living in food deserts and lacking easy access to nutritious and affordable food. Food insecurity can be addressed by improving wages, expanding affordable housing, pushing forward legislation toward ending systemic racism, and ensuring that government programs like Medicaid and SNAP (or locally, CalFresh) are fully funded. Locally, we must increase food access, support community-led initiatives around food sovereignty, make improvements to public transportation, and fight for funding the budget for food pantries and other food service providers.

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

Ideally, the Department of Public Health would be taking the lead as a convener of various departments that have a role to play in food security for our city. My office is in regular contact with food with the Department of Public Health, the Food Security Task Force, the Tenderloin Food Policy Council, and numerous food assistance organizations, so we are in a position to hear where there may be failures in coordination and areas for improvement.

I will continue to use my position as Chair of the Government Audit and Oversight Committee to ensure that our City remains on track- and continues coordinating- to rise to the occasion when it comes to food security, just like I have for many other issues our City faces. I will also continue commissioning audits and holding oversight hearings as necessary to ensure departmental coordination and efficiency in delivering on city needs and goals, including our food security and public health goals.

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

Food security is a public health issue, and I have championed food access and food security, especially in the Tenderloin and Fillmore neighborhoods of District 5. In our city with a \$15.9 billion budget, there is no possible excuse for allowing anyone to go to bed hungry. My work here includes:

- Organized with residents to stop the abrupt closure of Webster Street Safeway, the Fillmore's only full-service grocery store
- Passed resolution to save Market Match, a crucial program that benefits farmers markets, vendors, and low-income residents buying fresh produce
- Working with residents to bring a full-service grocery store to the Tenderloin, where there hasn't been one for decades
- Won funding for Halal Food Vouchers in the Tenderloin
- Supported Heart of the City Farmers Market during transition to Fulton Plaza
- Celebrated opening of new grocery store in long vacant space in Hayes Valley

The San Francisco-Marín Food Bank will be closing all Food Bank-run Pop-up Pantries by June 2025 due to cuts in government pandemic funding. This program currently serves 11,400 households, 75% of which are estimated to lose access to free weekly groceries when the funding ends. If elected, what would you do to ensure that all San Franciscans have access to nutritious foods?

I will continue to support community-led initiatives around food security and food sovereignty, and build on the work that my office is already doing (laid above) to increase access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food.