

## Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

# Jaime Gutierrez



Running for:  
**San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 9**

*"Access to food is vital to a healthy society. I would seek to find local funding for [the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank's Pop-up Pantry] program."*



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

In our society, a cause for hunger is not being able to purchase enough groceries. This may also be exacerbated by not having easy access to groceries if the groceries were far from a person's home or heavy such as a gallon of milk.

One of the reasons for high grocery costs is the cost of fuel. California has a \$2 per gallon higher cost than other neighboring states and only gasoline refined in California may be sold to Californians which contributes to driving up the cost per gallon. Groceries have high fuel requirements as they must be brought from a farm, possibly processed, then brought to a store. When fuel costs rise, so does the cost of groceries.

Consider an elder with the only income being social security income. When inflation occurs, they can not purchase the same quantity of groceries as before. Depending on the reduction in the quantity of groceries purchased, they may experience hunger.

Consider the single mother with children. When grocery costs rise, corners are cut and the children frequently eat less nutritional foods. This affects their development and puts them at a disadvantage with children eating a nutritional diet. Both of these cases require government intervention as we want a society in which people are well fed.

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

There are organizational models that work effectively when applied to less efficient systems. Food assistance programs appear to be a disparate collection of agencies that work independently from each other. (This is quite common in government since the programs arise at different times under different circumstances). With these agencies, one of the first activities to undertake is to standardize the records of a participating person between all food programs. This will also require standardizing how transactions with participating people are recorded. With this level of standardization, every assistance program will be aware of all services being provided from every other program. Also, this level of awareness across multiple food programs frequently connects people to other programs that may be more effective for the person.

What also happens with the standardization of protocols is the exhibition of redundancies and inefficiencies. This permits more effective allocation of resources which makes the food assistance programs more effective. This is what we want.

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

This may not be possible. Fast food has been proven to be unhealthy. However, people enjoy it. Coercing people to alter what they choose to eat is not effective. Consider compelling a Brahman to eat a steak. The results will be poor.

What is reasonable however is trying to educate people about which foods provide benefits. Only this type of subtle influencing may encourage more people to try new foods that will bring them benefits.

District 9 has three major cultures each with their own cuisine choices, so my office could support an information campaign.

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?

Access to food is vital to a healthy society. I would seek to find local funding for this program. There are currently lavish city contracts for building materials at the airport that result in payments of over 40% what the other suppliers are charging. (I learned this from a friend who works at the airport). These contracts must be examined and the savings applied to programs such as ensuring nutritional foods. Also, other budgets such as the PUC need to be examined for similar contracts and possibly some non-profits that can not justify their budgets. Therefore, I believe we will be able to find the money to fund a program as important as the one that feeds people even with the contraction in tax revenue the city is beginning to experience.