

Candidate Hunger Action Challenge

Scott Weiner



Running for:
**California State Senate,
District 11**

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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?

Food insecurity is a policy choice — a choice not to devote sufficient resources to ensure everyone in our state has the food they need to survive and thrive. So many Californians cannot afford our state's cost of living, and this leads to tragic choices to forego food and to forego healthy food. We have a moral responsibility to avoid this choice by creating stronger access to healthy food choices.

In the Senate, I've worked alongside food banks and community organizations to expand access to healthy food. I authored legislation to advance the CalFresh Double Up program, and this year, as Senate Budget Chair, I advanced the reinstatement of funding for that program. I authored legislation to simplify the CalFresh application for seniors and people with disabilities. We need to do more to support these life-saving efforts.

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

California's administration of CalFresh leaves much to be desired. California — and San Francisco — have unreasonably low uptake of the program by eligible individuals. We need to do so much more to ensure everyone who's eligible for CalFresh is signed up to receive it.

One reason for this low uptake is that CalFresh is administered at the county level, not at the state level. When people move from county to county, for example, their benefit doesn't automatically follow them. We must integrate these systems much more deeply. It's unacceptable to allow people to fall through the gaps.

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

I'm deeply committed to making our state healthier, and food access is a huge part of that. San Francisco — specifically, Project Open Hand — pioneered the concept of food as medicine. I strongly support that model.

I authored the legislation that created the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project. As Senate Budget Chair this year, we delivered \$10 million in state funding for that program, ensuring that many Californians, regardless of income, have access to fruits and vegetables. Increasing access to fresh produce is critical for improving the health of our community as a whole. I will continue fighting for healthy food to be accessible to all in our state.

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?

I've pushed hard for state funding to give food banks the resources they need to provide healthy food to everyone who needs it. During the pandemic, I secured emergency funding for the Mission Food Hub and Meals on Wheels in San Francisco, and I supported emergency investment in our food banks statewide. I'll continue being a strong partner for food banks, working hard in partnership with them to ensure that healthy food is accessible across our state.